

Environmental Supplement

My family and the East Prince Waste Watch program

By Susie Brown
 FOR YEARS I HAVE BEEN BUGGING MY father to start a compost pile at home. Once time he actually gave in, and we lasted about a week before people got tired of sorting their garbage before throwing it out. Recently, out in the boonies that I call home, a program was implemented to help save the earth. OK, maybe not the earth, but it is supposed to help the landfills on PEI. If you've been watching the news anytime in the last few months you would know that I am talking about the East Prince Waste Watch Program.

Upon the arrival of our green, black, and brown containers a yell went up, "What the heck am I supposed to do with these things?" That question was not so quickly answered by the information brochures that come with the containers. This is where I start to complain. The brochures are confusing at times to read, the lists under each container are not easy to use and the colours of the containers have confused my mother. We

have had for some time now a large blue garbage can in our kitchen which all household wastes went into. Now we have a tiny brown bucket into which all compostible material goes. On the occasions that I go home to do laundry there are four people in my house, and for some reason it only takes us half a day to fill this minute brown bucket. I actually don't find this all that suprising considering the amount of stuff you are supposed to put into it: Egg cartons, animal bones, vegetable peelings, glossy paper, coffee grounds, and many more other compostible things. This bucket is no larger than two shoe boxes, just trying to fit the egg carton into it is a chore. So, two or three times a day we do our bit for the

environment by taking our little brown bucket out to the green container, which is about twenty five feet away from the house.

By the end of two weeks this container really starts to smell. And as my father mentioned, if it smells now, imagine what it will smell like when summer arrives.

There are two blue bags that you are supposed to use for your cans and newspapers. Cans must be rinsed out, have the labels removed, the lid placed inside and then flattened to hold the lid in. I can do this, but my grandmother has a hard time trying to bend this metal can. So, now we have the brown bucket, the two blue bags, on to the actual 'waste'.



Waste is supposed to go into the black container outside. This isn't a problem except they didn't supply a special bucket for in the house, so we have been using our old blue garbage can. This is an extremely difficult concept for my mother to grasp, that the garbage goes in the blue garbage can and then into the black container. She feels that blue is meant only for recyclables.

My parents seem to like the new system overall, except we still have a few unanswered questions about what goes where. I think the program needs to look into having larger brown buckets for families and perhaps an easier system of coding to make it easier for people who can't read, or have problems understanding the pamphlet.

I would like to applaud the people who put the system together, I know it still has a few bugs, but it's coming along and will soon be greatly improved. I would like to see this program implemented right here on campus, as well as around the rest of the island.

'Verminators' spring up across the country

(CUP)
 Campuses across Canada are beginning to invest in vermi-composters to get rid of their food waste.

Both Simon Fraser University and the University of Ottawa have introduced worm box composters this year.

Dayve Hollington, co-ordinator of the worm box project at SFU, said their box is a scale model, and is meant to publicize a larger recycling project being constructed at SFU. The model worm box was set up earlier this month.

Hollington explained that worm box, or vermi-composting, is a simple process that imitates the natural cycle of decay.

Food refuse, or wet waste, is mixed with soil that contains an earthworm population. The worms eat the refuse, enriching the soil in which they are suspended. The soil is then ready to be used as fertilizer in landscaping projects.

Hollington explained that the worm box model is designed to show that worm waste reclamation is efficient and practical. He hopes that the model will educate other campuses about wet waste recycling possibilities.

The University of Ottawa installed a mega vermi-composter in its main cafeteria last November. It is so successful the university plans to obtain five more for the

campus.

The pilot worm box has been composting more than 60 pounds of food scraps each day.

"It's working great," said Marcel Labelle,

The U of O administration decided to expand its waste-reduction program after the Ontario provincial government legislated universities to reduce their waste by 50 per cent before the year 2000.

Meanwhile at SFU, the first of four stages is already in the works. Wood chips from storm clean-up at SFU will be mixed with wet waste, and the resulting fertilizer will be used in campus landscaping.

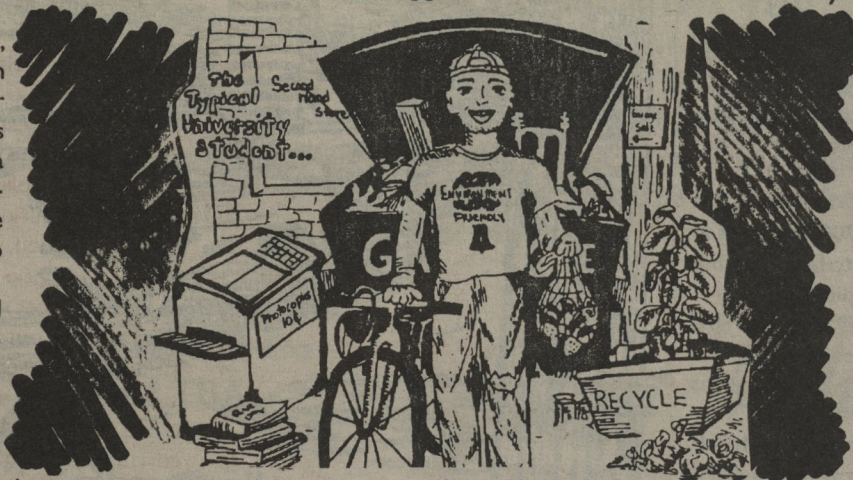
"It's been written into the landscaper's contract. With the help of worms, the chips from the dead wood will be reclaimed, along with wet waste," Hollington said.

The second, third and fourth steps eventually will help reclaim all food refuse produced on the SFU campus.

Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group officials praised Hollington's efforts, saying SFU wastes money disposing wet waste in landfills.

"The landscaping staff need fertilizer to do their job. Composting closes the circle. Composting makes good business and environmental sense."

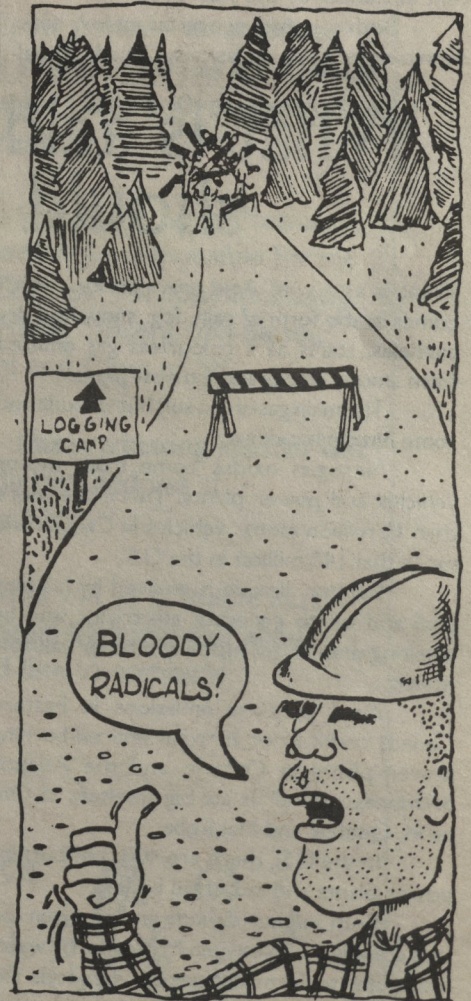
Hollington is now negotiating with the British Columbia Institute of Technology, studying the feasibility of introducing a waste management program on that campus.



waste management and recycling co-ordinator for the university. "It's the best thing we could have come up with."

The worms have been reproducing at such a rapid rate that Labelle will have to relocate 20 pounds of worms from that composter into a new one.

The U of O composter is a top-of-the-line model, and can degrade meat scraps, dairy products and most organic wastes. The finished compost will be used as fertilizer around campus. Labelle said the main disadvantage is the hefty price tag of \$1,500 per vermi-composter.



graphic by Michel LeSann