


# BETWEEN THE LINES

An issue update from the *Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League*

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## RECYCLING: ENERGY, MONEY, RESOURCES

Energy crunch, budget slash, depletion of natural resources: buzzwords of the 1980's. How has this come to pass in America, the land of plenty?

Japan is a highly competitive trading partner with the United States with a standard of living equal to our own, but it is an island nation with relatively scarce natural resources. How much could the United States do with the resources it now discards? The chart at right gives an idea.

Since the beginning of this century the U.S. has become increasingly wasteful of its resources. Today we generate for half of the world's solid waste.

### RECYCLING COMPARISON

	U.S.A.	JAPAN
PAPER	23%	50%
NEWSPRINT	30%	95%
GLASS	9%	95%
ALUMINUM	25%	73%
STEEL	3%	50%

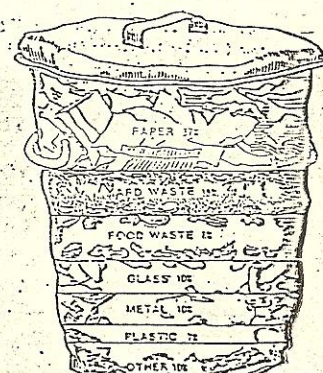
The following figures show the energy savings and environmental benefits to be gained with recycling:

Source: *The Solid Waste Handbook*

	ALUMINUM	STEEL	PAPER	GLASS
REDUCTION OF:				
ENERGY USE	95%	60%	50%	20%
AIR POLLUTION	95%	85%	74%	20%
WATER POLLUTION	97%	76%	35%	-
WATER USE	-	40%	58%	50%

Energy, money, and natural resources are thrown away whenever we take out the trash and dump it in a landfill or burn it in an incinerator. Recycling one aluminum can saves the metal that it is made from, the energy it took to make it (equal to half a can of gasoline), and the cash received at the buy-back center. This holds true for other materials as well. And this does not take into account the environmental costs of burial or burning of trash.

Contents of typical household garbage



# THE SOLUTION TO POLLUTION

Landfills leak. Incinerators pollute the air and water. Even so-called "waste-to-energy" plants reclaim only a fraction of the energy that could be saved by reusing the original material. Landfills and incinerators are also becoming more expensive to build and operate as the experience from previous mistakes causes an increase in regulation and construction. Add to this the growing grassroots movement for environmental justice that rightfully seeks to prevent the sacrifice of the health and well-being of communities near such facilities.

So what, a reasonable person might ask, do we do with all our trash? This:

**SOURCE REDUCTION**- A 10% reduction in solid waste generation can be achieved by either reducing packaging, re-using containers, and in general reducing consumption.

**COMPOSTING**-A 30-40% reduction in the amount of waste can be realized with this ancient, low-tech method of processing organic waste. This includes food scraps, yard clippings, brush, and leaves. The material produced can be sold as a soil conditioner or mulch. This is a biological process that uses the natural bacteria present in such wastes to digest it and render it

useful again.

**RECYCLING**--This can reduce the waste stream another 40-50%. The materials reclaimed and processed for re-use include glass, paper, aluminum, steel, cardboard, plastics, rubber tires, used oil, and textiles. The cost of this method is far less than the nominal costs of landfilling and incineration. Also, it carries the added benefit of cash value returned to the community when recycled materials are sold.

**BALING**--The final reduction in waste volume can occur after the useful materials are removed. This can then be baled, compressed mechanically, to reduce it to a third of its original space. This further saves landfill space.

This hierarchy of solid waste management can be carried out by communities to reduce waste by 70-85%. What worked in the past is no longer good enough. By removing harmful wastes from household, industry, and commercial wastes, and making use of diminishing resources we can turn a solid waste crisis into an opportunity. This means business development, savings to taxpayers, and prevention of the spoiling of our natural environment.

*Source: Long Branch Environmental Education Center*

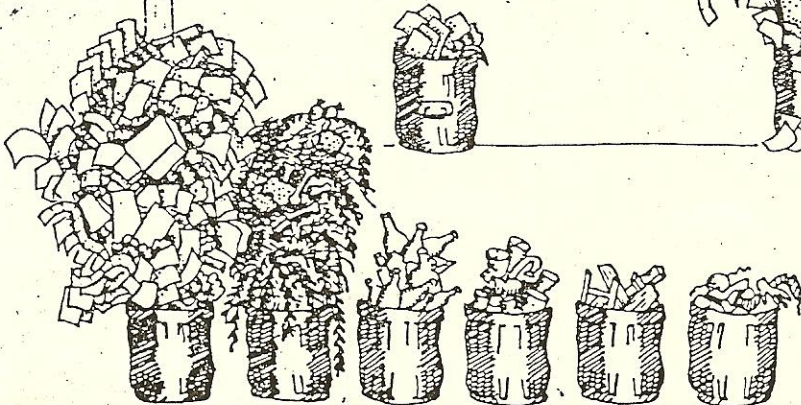
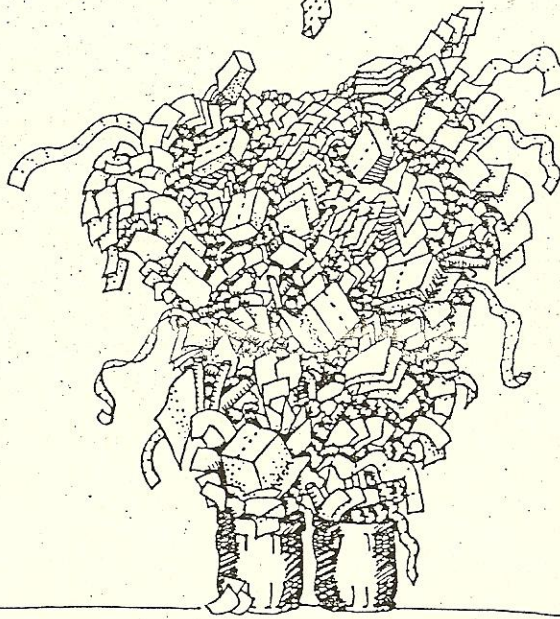
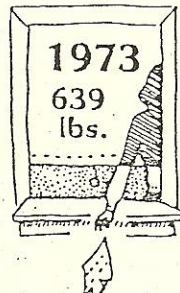
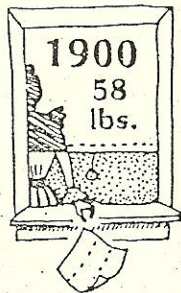
In Austria a county of 100,000 recycles 67% of its waste. In 1986, using a combination of source separation, recycling, and composting, a community reduced its waste stream by 65%. The following year it was reduced by 67%. This was achieved by recycling 27% and composting of 40%. Of the 40% composted, a 22% reduction came from the composting process itself in the release of carbon dioxide and water to the environment. The remaining 18% was the compost itself which was sold. In other words, one-fifth of the waste stream was reduced before one ounce of compost was sold. So while U.S. communities argue about how much can be recycled they are frequently ignoring one method which can make a huge dent in the wastestream: **COMPOSTING**. Adding more significance to that fact is that composting removes the very fraction of the waste which gives rise to many undesirable features of current landfill practices, that is, smell, vermin, leachate, and methane generation.

-Waste Not #9 5/31/88

## IT'S NOT WASTE UNTIL YOU WASTE IT

# GROWTH OF GARBAGE

AVERAGE AMOUNT USED IN U.S. OF PAPER BY 1 (ONE) PERSON ANNUALLY



920 lbs. PAPER  
440 lbs. FOOD & YARD WASTES  
200 lbs. GLASS  
160 lbs. METALS  
140 lbs. WOOD  
140 lbs. CLOTH, RUBBER PLASTIC, LEATHER

=

**1 TON GARBAGE**

# TRASH TO ASH EQUALS MONEY TO BURN

IT'LL TAKE YOUR BREATH AWAY

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