



Compost saves water. Use the green bin.

The double whammy of high temperatures and drought is affecting many regions around the globe. What can we do about it?

The short answer is “a lot.” Installing gray water and rainwater capture systems are two examples. Another highly effective way to help save water is composting. Good quality compost is 50 percent humus by weight, and humus both attracts and retains water. Humus is nature’s sponge.



When compost is applied to a local farm, the humus in that compost absorbs water from any rain or irrigation that touches the soil. Farmers like to apply compost where they grow plants, including fruit and nut trees, because the humus in compost makes water available to plant roots. To help save water for the benefit of all, San Franciscans and others who have access to urban compost collection programs are encouraged to place more compostable materials in their green bins.

With more feedstock, we can make more compost and help farms save more water. Compostable materials include: food scraps, such as kitchen trimmings and plate scrapings; food-soiled paper, such as used paper napkins and other paper that contains vegetable oil from food items; and plant cuttings, such as sticks and leaves.

Studies show if we increase organic matter by one percent on one acre of land by adding compost, we can save 16,500 gallons of water per acre per year. If we increase organic matter by one percent on 3,000 acres of land, the size of some farms, we will save 50 million gallons of water per year.

Urban compost collection programs, such as the one San Francisco and Recology pioneered, help cities achieve many other benefits too. For example, compost gives farmers a viable alternative to using chemical fertilizers and helps grow healthy food that comes back to your table.

So in the interest of our children and ourselves, we should all remember: Compost equals water. Place your coffee grounds, cantaloupe skins, and egg shells in a kitchen compost pail. Before you go to bed, empty the pail into your green compost bin. If we all do this, we can help save an extraordinary amount of water.

Keeping it simple: By recycling paper we not only save resources like trees, we also save water and energy. Please use the blue bin.



Please recycle and compost park trash

You get to the park or the beach and take in the fresh air and the green grass or the water, and pretty soon all those deadlines and worries start to fade away. Our parks, beaches and related open spaces are truly part of what makes San Francisco a premier city, a very livable city.

Let’s keep these places clean and recycle and compost any discards from such outings. That way the next time we visit a green space, we can enjoy it.

Working with San Francisco’s Recreation and Parks Department, Recology recently analyzed the trash left at a major city park after a sunny weekend day and found that more than 65 percent of the material could be recycled or composted.

Where recycling and compost collection bins exist, visitors are encouraged to utilize them. The City and the National Park Service are taking additional steps to help keep our parks and beaches clean, but they can’t place recycling stations,

which need to be serviced and maintained, at every corner.

So when visiting outdoor places, honor the backpackers’ ethic: If you pack it in, please pack it out.

Doing so will make you feel good. You will be part of the movement in San Francisco to recycle and compost as much trash as possible.

And the next time you go to the park, it will be that much cleaner and you will be able to enjoy the natural space for what it is intended to be — a nice place open to everyone.