



# Sustainability Newsletter

October 2014

## Dead Leaves—Valuable Composting Material!



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Attention all backyard composters: If you have an over-abundance of leaves in your yard this fall, don't bring them to the transfer station! They are extremely valuable to the compost process and are full of nutrients. Due to the fact that trees are deep rooted, they uptake lots of minerals from the soil, which end up in the leaves. It has been said that pound for pound, leaves contain twice as many minerals as manure!

Dead leaves provide necessary fibrous organic matter to your compost pile—the most nutritious source of “browns” available. In their natural state, leaves tend to mat down into a tight mass, thus not decomposing very quickly. One of the most effective ways to prepare your leaves for the compost bin is to shred them. This can be done easily by raking leaves into piles on the lawn, then running over them with your lawn mower.

By raking up as many leaves as you can in the fall, you may have enough “browns” to last you the whole year for your composting needs.

If you don't have a backyard compost bin or you have too many leaves to store for later, there is another simple option for using dead leaves. Instead of raking, simply use your lawnmower to chop up the leaves and leave them on the lawn. While leaving whole leaves on the lawn would smother it, tiny pieces of leaves keep the grass exposed to air and sun while enabling the leaves to break down, adding nitrogen to the soil.



Don't forget! Layering browns (leaves, straw, shredded cardboard, shredded newspaper, etc) with greens (fruit and vegetable scraps) is extremely important in the composting process in order to keep a balance of carbon and nitrogen for quick decomposition.

Even though winter is coming, you can still compost! Just keep using your backyard composting bin in the same way—layering browns and greens (but you may have to shovel a path through the snow!) Although the bin contents will freeze and no decomposition will occur, your bin will get a head start as soon as temperatures start to warm up in the Spring.

*This newsletter can be viewed online at: [www.rdbn.bc.ca/environmentalservices/recycling/sustainability-newsletter](http://www.rdbn.bc.ca/environmentalservices/recycling/sustainability-newsletter)*

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# Now You Can Recycle More Than Ever in Smithers!

Just this past month, the Smithers and Area Recycling Society and the Bulkley Valley Bottle Depot began accepting a wider range of printed paper and packaging under the Multi-Material BC program. These new recycling options mean that Electoral Area 'A' (Smithers Rural) and Smithers municipal residents will be able to recycle the same materials.



**NEW materials that can be recycled at the Smithers and Area Recycling Society Facility (2880 Tatlow Rd.) include:**

## Plastic Containers and Plastic Bags

- Plastic jugs and bottles with screw tops used for milk, cooking oil, pills/vitamins, laundry detergent, cleaning solutions, body care products, windshield washer fluid, etc.
- Plastic containers for peanut butter, jam, yogurt, condiments, personal care products, etc.
- Plastic clamshells for baked goods, fruit, produce, eggs, etc.
- Plastic cold drink cups with lids for take-out beverages
- Plastic garden pots and trays for bedding plants, seedlings, vegetable plants, etc.
- Empty single-use coffee and tea pods; lids must be removed
- Retail bags for groceries, bread bags, bags for produce and dry bulk foods
- Frozen vegetable bags, pre-washed salad bags
- Water softener salt and garden product bags
- Outer bags for diapers and feminine hygiene products



## Aluminum and Steel Containers

- Aluminum cans and lids used for food, lubricating oil, foam insulation, pesticides, etc.
- Aluminum foil wrap and foil take-out containers, including pie plates, food trays, etc.
- Aluminum aerosol containers used for food, air fresheners, shaving cream, deodorant, hairspray, foam insulation, etc.
- Steel cans and lids for food, dog food, etc.
- Spiral wound cans and metal lids for frozen juice concentrate, potato chips, cookie dough, nuts, etc.



**Note:** Mixed paper and cardboard continue to be accepted at the Smithers & Area Recycling Society Facility.

**NEW materials that can be recycled at the Bulkley Valley Bottle Depot (3446 19th Ave.) include:**

## Foam Packaging

- Plastic foam containers and trays used for meat and produce (*no plastic overwrap or liquid-absorbing pads*)
- Foam egg cartons
- Foam clamshells, cups and bowls for take-out food
- Plastic foam cushion packaging to protect electronics, small appliances, etc.



## Glass

- Clear or coloured non-deposit glass bottles and jars



For a more detailed list of accepted products, visit <http://recyclinginbc.ca/>

## How to Make your Food Last Longer

Did you know that on average, Canadians throw away 1 in 4 produce items? That adds up to almost \$600 every year in wasted food! By making some easy changes in the way you store produce, you can help it last longer, therefore reducing overall food waste.

After fruits and vegetables are picked, they still “breathe” meaning they give off gases that stimulate ripening. By either warming or cooling the fruits/veggies, you can speed up the ripening process or slow it down. Here are some ways to help your produce last longer:

1. When you get your fruits home from the store, take them out of the plastic bag. Without air, the fruits will suffocate, which speeds up the decay process.
2. Only wash your fruits right before you eat them. Extra moisture can increase the rate of decomposition and encourage mould growth.
3. Avoid removing stems from the fruits—keep them whole as long as possible. This helps avoid the growth of micro-organisms in the cracks.
4. Make sure to eat the most perishable foods first. For example, be sure to consume fresh berries (which go bad within a few days) before potatoes (which can last up to a month or so).
5. If you want to help ripen a piece of fruit in a hurry, try putting it in a paper bag with a banana. (eg. peach).

Consult the chart below for tips on how to store different produce items for maximum freshness:

In the Fridge		In a Bowl on the Counter	In the Cupboard
<i>Separate Drawer</i>	<i>Separate Drawer</i>	Avocados	Garlic
Apples	Broccoli	Peaches	Onions
Cantaloupe	Carrots	Pears	Potatoes
Honeydew	Cucumbers	Nectarines	Winter Squash (Eg. Acorn, Butternut, Spaghetti)
Apricots	Leafy Greens	Bananas	
	Peppers	Tomatoes	
	Kiwis		

## Reviving Wilted Celery

Has your celery gone limp in the refrigerator? Don't fret! There is a way to restore it to its previous life. First, take the bunch of wilting celery and slice off about 1-2cm from the bottom. Place the bunch with the cut side down into a glass of cold water. Then, allow it to sit in the water for a few hours or overnight. By the next morning, you should have a crisp bunch of celery, ready to be eaten!



## Ingredient of the Month: Beets!

Beets come into season in the fall, and are an extremely nutritious vegetable! They are high in potassium, magnesium, folate, betaine, phosphorus and Vitamins A, B and C. Beets are also known as a liver tonic, blood purifier and are high in antioxidants. The leaves and stems of beets (aka beet greens) are also good for you, full of a lot of the same vitamins and minerals as the beets themselves. Try mixing the greens into a salad or blending them into a smoothie for an extra nutrition kick.



### BBQ Beets with Feta

#### Ingredients:

5 beets, chopped  
3 tbsp feta cheese, crumbled  
1 tsp olive oil  
Salt and Pepper

#### Directions:

Scrub beets and remove the tails and stems. Chop into 1 inch pieces and place onto a sheet of aluminum foil. Drizzle beets with olive oil and sprinkle feta cheese, salt and pepper on top. Wrap with foil. Place on the top rack of a preheated barbecue, cooking for approximately 30 minutes. Beets can also be roasted in the oven at 400°F for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.



### Dark Chocolate Beet Brownies

#### Ingredients:

2 large beets, stems removed  
3 large eggs  
2/3 cup liquid honey  
1/2 cup coconut oil  
2 tsp vanilla extract  
3/4 cup all-purpose flour  
1 1/4 cup cocoa powder  
1 tsp baking powder  
1/2 tsp salt  
1 cup dark chocolate chips

#### Directions:

Place the beets in a large saucepan and add water to cover the beets. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer until tender (about 45 minutes). Rinse beets in cold water. Let beets cool until they can be handled. The skins can now be easily peeled off. Puree the beets in a blender or food processor. You may need to add 1 tbsp or so of water.

Preheat your oven to 350°F.

In a large bowl whisk together the eggs, coconut oil, and honey. Add the vanilla extract and beet puree and whisk to fully combine. Mix the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt into the wet ingredients. Stir in the chocolate chips.

Pour the batter into a greased 9x13 inch baking pan. Bake for about 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the brownies comes out clean but still moist. Cool the brownies completely before cutting. They will keep in an airtight container for 3 days.



Shredded raw beets make a great addition to any salad recipe. First, peel your raw beets, then shred them either using a grater or the shredding function in a food processor. The dish pictured is a combination of mixed greens, shredded carrot, shredded beets, avocado and hemp hearts with a simple vinaigrette of olive oil, balsamic vinegar and honey.