

## 9-12-14 The Joys of Composting

Moving to new house involves so many adjustments and many of them are so daunting and weird, you might not be ready for them all right at the start. You need to change your license. (I haven't done it yet; feels weird to actually see a different address.) You need to sign up for a rubbish and recycling program. (I haven't done that either. I need to get to the town hall during their hours, after taking off all kinds of time to pack and move. Also, I am reluctant to go because I am not a fan of the "pay as you throw" program. I understand the theory and intention of decreasing waste and increasing recycling. I am telling you that the numbers do not tell the whole story! Some people cannot afford the "town bags". Consider donating some to your local food pantry. Many people, when faced with the pay as you throw program, help the rubbish numbers go down because they bring their rubbish to work, give it to friends in other towns not using the system or they even toss it on the roadside. These alternative means of rubbish disposal were not the goal or intention when towns adopted the pay as you throw program. Yet, they are a reality. In fact, I have in my files in Halifax, a letter from a neighboring health agent from many years ago listing all the reasons why he was not in favor of the program and all the roadside bags of rubbish he had investigated for proof of ownership; all from the nearby towns with recent adoption of requiring town bags for rubbish.

I can understand requiring transparent bags. That would allow, at a glance, the compliance with the recycling goals. Plymouth's refuse program provides roadside pickup of rubbish every week and recycling every other week. They drop off two barrels with different color lids for these purposes. It sounds great but the rubbish inside the rubbish barrel needs to be inside the special town bags. Good intention; bad idea. Why not let people use regular, see-through bags?

It won't be much of a burden for me because I recycle and I compost. Still, it will be annoying to pay extra for "special" plastic bags. Everyone does not have the money for special plastic bags and everyone does not have the realistic capability of composting. Ideally, it is possible for all but a little bit of yard and a little bit of woods does help, which my new house has. (That was on my must have list.)

Every day I make lists and a recent list included this: "Choose composting area." So, I did, and it is wonderful. The previous owner had been dumping grass clippings for years behind a fence (but still on the same property. [whew!]) and it resulted in a beautiful, soft top soil that I can use for gardening.

Another listed item was: "Start weeding". I haven't started in on the invasive vine of bittersweet but I am looking forward to it! I won't ever be able to keep it away, for it is well established, but I can keep it from the edge of my property and reduce it.

I did start in on the weeding around the house and, I have to admit, that even though my hands will hurt afterward, it is very rewarding! It feels better to pull someone else's weeds than

your own. Someday they will be my weeds and it will probably feel like a chore but, for now, I have the joy of pulling someone else's weeds, with a bit of a tsk, tsk attitude.

What to do with the weeds, though? If you toss them onto your compost area, they will multiply. I decided to use the least harmful with the most benefit approach of killing them inside either black rubbish bags and/or rubbish barrels. In time, they will compost on their own, with the seeds dying from the heat and lack of sun. In the winter, they can be added to brush burning.

It felt great to pull out the weeds, as though I was pulling out every problem on my life and tossing it away!

So, I am gradually adjusting to the move, with some comical discoveries, too. Several days after moving in, I decided to check the mail box at the house. It had mail for me! I am no longer a rural delivery address, checking my mail at the road. It is delivered to the house! And the mailman said hello to me!

Will wonders never cease? Composting is a joy and so isn't pulling weeds, meeting new neighbors and living in a more manageable sized house.

*Cathleen Drinan is the health agent for Halifax and Plympton. She can be reached at 781 293 6768 or [cdrinan@town.halifax.ma.us](mailto:cdrinan@town.halifax.ma.us)*