



Media release
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Reducing and reusing your organic waste

The average Selwyn resident sends about 265kg of refuse to landfill each year. But a lot of this waste doesn't need to be sent there - it could be composted or returned to your garden.

A recent audit of a sample of Selwyn residents' refuse shows organic material is the single largest component of the Council kerbside refuse collection – comprising almost 50 percent of the total. For the rubbish bags, 88 per cent of the organic material is kitchen waste. Similarly, 43 percent of the refuse in the larger 80-litre refuse bins is organic material.

The Selwyn District Council will spend close to \$1.8 million this financial year in transport costs and waste levies to send rubbish to Kate Valley. Gavin Sole, Selwyn District Council's Solid Waste Manager says that if we reduced this amount by only 10 percent the district could potentially save \$180,000 per year.

"Selwyn households are very active recyclers and have significantly increased the amount of rubbish being recycled over the past few years," says Mr Sole.

"Recycling plastics, cardboard, paper, cans and glass has now become second nature but we largely ignore food waste. There are some very simple and effective ways we can reduce the amount of organic waste we are producing."

Tips for reducing the amount of organic waste:

- Be more aware of how to store and use food more effectively. It starts with buying the correct quantity of food - buying in bulk only saves you money if you consume everything you purchase
- Get label savvy - 'use-by' dates are about food safety. As long as the food is stored correctly and isn't opened it should be safe to eat before its use-by date
- A 'best before' date indicates that the products quality (freshness, texture and taste) will be reduced after that date. Check the products condition, if it looks okay it can usually be safely eaten shortly after the best before date
- Make a list of what you need before you go shopping. Check your freezer, refrigerator and pantry so you don't buy more of what you already have, especially if it's perishable
- Cook with what you have and reuse your leftovers in a new dish for the next night's meal or freeze them for later.

Mr Sole says as well as reducing waste that goes to a landfill, there are cost effective ways to recycle your own kitchen and garden waste and use it on your garden.

How to dispose of your organic waste:

- Keep a small container in your kitchen for food scraps which you transfer to your green lidded organics bin each night

- Composting - this is a natural process in which micro-organisms convert organic matter such as leaves, vegetable peeling, grass clippings and paper into a rich soil conditioner for your garden
- Mulch any green garden waste and return it to your garden to conserve moisture and improve fertility
- A new shredder has been purchased by the council and will soon start circulating around different locations in the district to provide a green waste disposal service.
- Animals such as pigs and chickens can be fed most scraps
- Bokashi compost buckets - this is an anaerobic method of composting your organic waste that pickles rather than decays organic material. It doesn't produce nasty smells and creates a fantastic fertiliser
- Worm farms – this is a cold composting technique which turns organic waste into a nutrient-rich fertiliser for your plants without the heat or smell.

Worm farms and bokashi composting bins are available from the Council at a subsidised rate for Selwyn residents.

“Everyone has a role to play in reducing food waste. We have made great progress in increasing the amount of waste we recycle and it would be great to see a reduction in the organic material going to landfill. To do this we need people to think twice before you put something in the bin – and ask yourself whether it could be recycled, composted or reused,” says Mr Sole.

“Producing less rubbish is also a great way to reduce the amount your household spends on rubbish as you can switch to a smaller red bin or bags,” adds Mr Sole.

For more information regarding fortnightly rubbish and recycling collection, a list of what can go in the organics bin and to see the collection calendar visit our website:

www.selwyn.govt.nz/rubbish

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