

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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WHY ORGANIC WASTE COLLECTION

12 billion pounds. That is the amount of food waste alone that ends up in landfills each year in California. Add yard waste and other “organic” wastes and that number easily tops 66 billion pounds! Waste that is considered organic does not have the same meaning as organically grown or USDA Organic. Organic waste is defined as the following types of waste that are typically found in most landfills: food, paper, lumber, and yard trimmings. When these wastes interact with liquids, they begin to breakdown and, with the absence of oxygen, they produce methane. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas, many times worse than carbon dioxide in our environment. Landfills are the third largest producers of methane in the United States, including California. For this reason, among others, the California Legislature passed Senate Bill 1383 Short Lived Climate Pollutants (SLCP): Organic Waste Reductions. These regulations will begin to be implemented beginning January 1, 2022, with the goals of reducing organic waste sent to landfills by 75 percent and to recover 20 percent of edible food that is currently landfilled by 2025. However, there is work we can do now to prepare for the changes that will be needed to reduce our organic waste sent to landfills.

As mentioned above, methane is a very potent greenhouse gas; however, it can be used in the same way that natural gas and propane can be used. Methane can power generators to produce electricity and it can be used to power vehicles, including the trucks that pick up your trash and recycling. By redirecting organic waste to specialized plants called anaerobic digesters they can capture the methane before it gets out in the environment and put it to a much better use.

Alternatively, organic waste can be composted to produce nutrient-rich soil amendments for gardens, orchards, and, when used in grazing land, can even sequester/remove carbon from the environment! There are many benefits to using compost in your garden including moisture retention, disease resistance, and it helps build a healthy soil ecosystem.

Separating your organic waste from your trash and recycling may seem like a useless exercise, but when that organic waste is put to these beneficial uses it not only prevents the pollutants from getting into our environment, but it also helps extend the life of landfills - keeping these valuable resources operating for the wastes that cannot be recycled, composted, or reused. By keeping the organic waste from being contaminated with plastic or other items that cannot be composted, it will help ensure that none of the organic waste ends back up in a landfill.

To learn about more ways to keep organic material out of the landfill, please contact the Tehama County Solid Waste Management Agency at (530) 528-1103, email tehamacountyrecycles@cotehama.ca.us, or visit www.tehamacountylandfill.com.