

## **Composting at Gurdwara: A Sustainable Step Towards Sewa**

Food waste is a significant issue in the United States, with implications both for the economy and the environment. Startling statistics from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reveal that more than one-third of the food produced in the country goes to waste, resulting in annual financial losses amounting to hundreds of billions of dollars. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) emphasizes that food waste surpasses any other commonly found material in landfills, contributing significantly to the emission of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Greenhouse gases trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere and contribute to global warming.

Within the context of Sikhism, we are acquainted with Guru Ka Langar (free communal meal), where food is lovingly prepared and served at Sikh Gurdwaras. However, have we ever paused to consider what happens to the waste generated during langar preparations? The vegetable peels, spoiled cutoffs, onion skins, fruit peels, used tea leaves, and the leftover food on the Sangat's (congregation's) plates—where do they go? Unfortunately, this waste is typically collected in garbage bags and disposed of in landfills, thereby contributing to climate change.

The Westborough Gurdwara Sahib (WGS) Sustainability Committee has addressed this issue by implementing a composting program. Through this initiative, we aim to divert langar food waste from landfills and repurpose it. Composting is a natural process that converts organic materials, including food waste, into nutrient-rich compost. This compost serves as a natural fertilizer, nourishing plants and aiding in their growth.

By composting, we not only enrich the soil with valuable nutrients but also enhance its water-retention capabilities, preventing erosion by reducing runoff. Furthermore, composting significantly reduces the amount of waste that ends up in landfills, leading to cost and carbon emissions reductions associated with waste transportation and processing. At WGS, we have designed a poster outlining the five steps for Langar Waste Disposal, aimed at encouraging the Sangat to understand the importance of waste reduction and actively contribute to its elimination.

Once Sangat members are done with Guru ka Langar, they need to follow the steps mentioned in the poster attached below. We also created posters to be displayed in the Kitchen area, where the waste can be categorized into the three main categories: compost, recycling, and trash. Attached below are the images of the posters. Please reach out to [greensewa@nessc.org](mailto:greensewa@nessc.org) with any questions.



# 5 Steps of Langar Waste Disposal

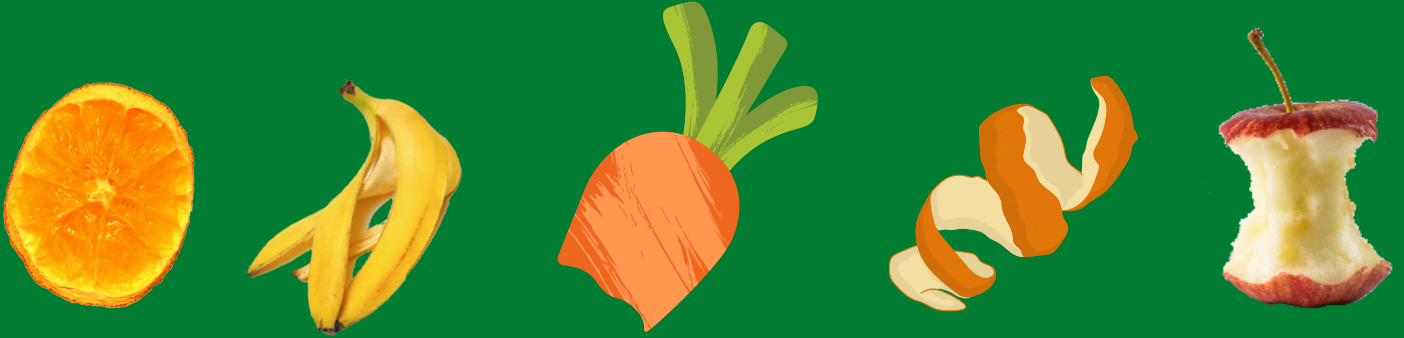


- STEP 1**  
Pour out water
- STEP 2**  
Stack cup and bowl
- STEP 3**  
Put spoon in container
- STEP 4**  
Throw out food and napkin
- STEP 5**  
Stack plate

**40%** of food is thrown out in the US. WGS is composting to reduce langar food waste from going into the landfill and reusing it instead. Composting is a natural fertilizer full of nutrients, which helps plants grow.

# COMPOST

## FOOD SCRAPS



## SOILED PAPER PRODUCTS

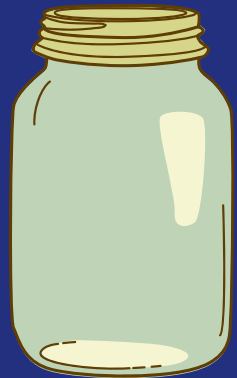
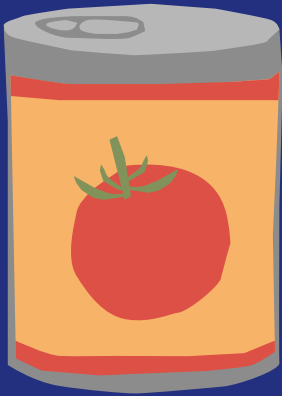


## CERTIFIED COMPOSTABLE TABLEWARE



# RECYCLE

## GLASS, METAL & PLASTIC



## PAPER, CARDBOARD & BOXES



# TRASH

**NOT CERTIFIED COMPOSTABLE, NON-RECYCLABLE  
PACKAGING & TABLEWARE**



**PLASTIC BAGS & WRAPPERS**

