



Compost Everything – The Movie  
-David The Good

Marjory: Hello, and welcome to The Homegrown Food Summit. This is Marjory Wildcraft, your host and guide. I like to envision us being on top of a mountain, at a summit of all things, looking down into a really busy and productive valley and getting a peak into the backyards, and small farms, and gardens of all these amazing people who are really producing a ton of food and medicine. We're going to pop down to that side of the valley where David the good is, David Goodman.

I got to tell you a little quick story about Dave. He's a blogger for The Grow Network. He and I often have a lot of interaction back and forth. Dave this last summer had a land race going with these tatume squash. At the end of the summer when he had harvested them he sent me a little envelope full of the seeds. He said, "Hey, Marjory. You got to check out this squash. It's really awesome." He sent me the seeds and what Dave didn't know was that I also had a land race going with the exact same variety of tatume squash. What I did as a joke is I put a full grown squash in a box and mailed it back to Dave and said, "Hey, Dave. Those seeds were amazing. I planted them in the ground, and look what happened."

Anyway, this guy is crazy, and he will show you how to compost everything. I mean really everything, all the disgusting stuff, as well as all the good stuff. He has really great techniques for easy how to do it simply. Dave's video last year was by far one of the top favorites in the whole summit. That's one of the reasons we have him back, for sure. Let me give you a little background on him. David the good is a naturalist, a part time scientist, and a hardcore gardener who's grown his own food since 1984. Check that out. At age five he sprouted a bean in a Dixie cup, and he hasn't stopped growing since. Dave is the author of four books, Compost Everything, The Good Guide to Extreme Compost, Totally Crazy Easy Florida Gardening, and Create Your Own Florida Food Forest. His latest Amazon best seller is Grow or Die, The Good Guide to Survival Gardening.

Dave currently has over twenty intensive beds, and over a hundred fruit trees, and a series of ongoing experiments in progress ranging from cross species grafting to producing a better pumpkin for the south. I think that was the one he and I were exchanging seeds on. Anyway, you can catch more of his experience at [thesurvivalgardener.com](http://thesurvivalgardener.com). He also, again, blogs for The Grow Network, and we love having Dave around. Let me let you go with Dave. You're going to really enjoy this one.

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Dave : I'm David the good, author of Compost Everything, The Good Guide to Extreme Composting. It's obvious that we throw out way too much stuff. I once estimated that about fifty percent of what goes in our trash could have been recycled into compost or into soil. Today I'm going to show you how to compost without worrying about nitrogen and carbon ratios, without worrying about big, stinky piles, without worrying about turning, but composting the way nature does it. I'm going to show some stuff you've probably never seen before and teach you how to put just about everything back into the soil. Let's do it. ...

If you look at a forest it's continually dropping leaves, and limbs, birds perch up in the trees, and they drop their droppings, animals die on the forest floor, animals leave their droppings on the floor. There is a massive amount of biomass in a forest. Biomass is all the organic, growing, living material, and it's continually falling and it's recycling. The forest floor is always being replenished with new material. This is why a garden like the Back to Eden garden, if you've ever seen the Back to Eden film with Paul Gautschi ... He talks about how his garden, it just gets richer every single year, because he's not tilling the soil, and the organics matter isn't being burned off by the wind, and by the sun, and by erosion, and everything else. It's continually dropping forest matter down on the ground.

If you were to look at this layers right here you could see that from the surface where the leaves fall, and then down lower, there's a layer of organic matter that goes down quite a ways, and then it starts to go into subsoil where it thins out, and you have mostly mineral material rather than organic material. If you recreate this by simply dropping materials around trees, you can take paper plates, you can take kitchen scraps, you can take anything that rots well and is non-toxic, throw it around the base of a tree. If you think it looks ugly, you can throw some more mulch on top of it to hide it, and just let it rot into the ground. It will feed directly in place. You don't have to make a pile and turn it.

You don't have to worry about ratios. Nature doesn't worry about ratios. Things just drop on the ground and they rot. It may take time. I mean, something like a stick takes awhile to rot into the ground, but it's being slowly consumed by fungi. The fungi are turning it into soil. Eventually it'll become part of the ground again. You don't have to think it over too much. You just have to throw stuff on the ground and let it go. That's really the secret. The way nature makes compost is to throw things on the ground. Just throw it on the ground, and it's going to become compost.

Now, obviously you might not want to take a dead opossum and throw it on the ground, because it's going to get carried off, and dragged around your yard, and it's going to stink, and it's going to bring the buzzards in. It'll get composted certainly, but it may not get composted where you want it. There's other things you have to do if you want some of that nasty sort of things, kitchen scraps that are going to be stinky and that sort of stuff. You want to compost that in a different way, but with your leaves, mulch, sticks, paper plates, cardboard, things like that, that can just rot right on the ground as long as your HOA doesn't catch you. ...

Hey. You want to see something disgusting? Oh, come on. You know you want to see it. Just come here. Come here. See that? Can you smell that? Yeah. You know what that is? That's a barrel of solid gold. That, my friend, is homemade fish emulsion. Do you have any idea how much this stuff sells for? I made it myself. I'm going to tell you how to make it. Are you ready? First of all, you have to have some friends that will bring you buckets of rotten fish guts. That's what I have. My friends Mart and Rick came over one day with a couple of five gallon buckets filled with fish guts, and because I appreciated their gift I said, "Thank you very much." Instead of just throwing on the ground, or maybe spattering it around the front of a neighbor's house as a prank, I decided to make

fish emulsion out of it.

First of all, I put the yucky, rotten, stinking fish guts down in the bottom of this barrel. Then I added in some molasses to give it a little sugar and get it kicking. I also threw in some moringa leaves and some shredded wood to add a little more carbon. You don't need to do this, but I did it anyways. Just figured I'd get a little extra something. Then you throw in water, and you let it sit. This has been sitting here for at least a year. Stir it up real good every once and a while. At first the smell is incredible. Now it pretty much just smells like a wharf. Take a gallon or so of this, mix it in with maybe five gallons of water, or even make it thinner than that. You can go around and water your trees, water your plants, water your gardens, and all of that mineral fertility that was in the fish, and in the guts, and every bit of nastiness, plants absolutely love it. They go crazy, and it gives them the micro nutrition that they need to thrive. Otherwise, all that beautiful fish guts would have gone to waste. We don't want fish guts to end up in a landfill do we? No. Recycle them into this. What is that? Five hundred dollars worth of fish emulsion? Pretty awesome for an afternoon's work. ...

This here is one of my favorite composting tools, a machete. Now, people often complain that they don't have enough compost. You never have enough stuff to compost. You might take a ten tons of stuff, and then by the time you end up composting it all in your pile, you end up with a bucket of compost. You say, "What happened? I never have enough compost." I deliberately grow plants that create compost. These here, that you can see over my head, these here are *Tithonia diversifolia*. It's a massive perennial sunflower, and it's one of my favorite plants, because it makes a lot of biomass, it pulls up a lot of micro-nutrients, and it's loaded with phosphorus. I grow these things from cuttings. I plant them all over my food forest, and then I chop them down a couple of times a year and use them for compost. At this time of year they're in full bloom. The butterflies love them. The bees love them. It's getting close to winter, so I want to start dropping them as mulch.

There is a pear tree right back there. We're going to go set that pear tree free, and we're going to mulch and compost around it at the same time. Let's do it. ... There we go. That's mulched and fertilized, composted in place. It took me about five minutes to chop down these sunflower canes and put them around here. If you live in a place where these giant sunflowers don't grow, don't worry about it. Grow Jerusalem artichokes. Grow comfrey. Even the invasive species that people are perpetually trying to get rid of are a good source for mulch and for fertility for the soil.

The reason a lot of these plants grow so well is that they're great at pulling up fertility. The most pain in the neck invasive trees are often great pioneer species for bad ground. They get in, they invade, they grow really fast. People try to cut them down and kill them. Why not plant a fruit tree next to them and cut the top off of that invasive tree over and over again, and throw it around the base. Let it rot. Let it feed the soil. You're growing compost right next to the tree. That's compost you don't have to buy, and that's fertility that that tree worked really hard for and it pulled up from all around your yard from it's root system. You're taking all the hard work that it just did, and you're giving it to one of your beloved fruit trees. It's really simple, and it's the way nature does

it. We're just doing it in fast forward by dropping it over and over again, rather than waiting for fall every year for things to fall to the ground or for a limb to be broken off of a tree and end up on the forest floor. We're doing it real fast by growing stuff that grows really quickly and then dropping it multiple times a year, and making lots and lots of humus and compost right in place, right where it's needed. Dead simple. ...

Hey. It's fall. This is the time when nature renews itself by dropping lots and lots of compost on the ground, lots and lots of leaves, yet a lot of the time we waste this fertility by going around with a rake or lawnmower, and bagging it all up, and getting rid of it. Why not use it for compost? Why not leave it where it is, right where it's supposed to be around the base of a tree to feed the soil? Let's talk about what I talk about in my book, *Compost Everything*, dealing with stupid, worthless trees. You see this tree? This is a sweet gum tree. This is considered a stupid, worthless tree. A lot of folks don't like this year. They consider it a trash tree. It grows quickly, and it drops a lot of little spiky things that if you're barefoot, you step on them and you get hurt. It also makes little suckers that pop up all over the place, yet there is a lot that's going on in this tree that you don't necessarily think about.

First of all, this tree is pulling in nutrition from perhaps as much as fifty or sixty feet away from the trunk, maybe even further. It's gathering nutrition probably from my neighbor's yard, and it's bringing it over here, and then in the fall it's dropping it on the ground. Another thing this tree is doing is it's playing host to all kinds of species, including the luna moth, which is one of the most beautiful moths we have in my neck of the woods. This tree is actually a compost factory. Now, let's say this tree is in the way, right? You want to plant, say an apple tree here, and this this is providing too much shade, and you've got a small yard. You've got a tree and think, "I'm going to get rid of it." A lot of people will call a tree company, have the tree hauled away, or they'll cut the tree down, and then they'll burn the tree. Don't do that. There's a lot better things you can do with it. If you do call a tree company and have them take the tree down, have them leave the pieces of the tree. Have them chop it up for you, or even better, have them mulch it and leave you you a big pile of good mulch. I'll show you what I've done with some of the trees that the neighbors have cut down.

I'm probably becoming a little bit predictable, but this is what I did with the logs. I threw them on the ground. This was an oak tree that was in the way and had a rotten out base, had it removed, and now it's sitting here at the edge of one of the beds for my food forest, and it's turning into soil. Not only that, it's got little turkey tail mushrooms on it, which are a medicinal mushroom. These are kind of old. These are our native varieties or cousins of turkey tail. You could use that ... You can actually take those logs down and put oysters or shiitakes or one of those mushrooms in there, and you get the benefit of having it turn into soil and produce you food at the same time, but ultimately this is going to produce food anyways, because it's feeding plants that are around it. It's feeding the fungi in the soil, and the fungi are feeding the plants. These yucca plants here, or cassava, are being fed by this stuff rotting into the ground. Any future trees that I plant here will be fed by this stuff rotting into the ground.

If you look underneath it ... Come on up close here. We have got life down here. It's a

place for worms. Look at this. Look at how beautiful that is. If you were to buy that, that would be expensive. You can't put a price on this kind of beautiful stuff. There's all kind of little things. Those little, round balls that are in there that you can probably see, those are frass or insect droppings. The insects are chewing in here. There's beetles, and millipedes, and who knows what else. They're turning this all into soil. Rather than carrying this away, it's making something totally beautiful that you know is chemical free and safe, because you harvested it out of your own yard. The trees do a lot of work. Just harness that work, turn it into soil, and you'll be feeding the ground for probably decades to come. ...

Now, this may not exactly be composting, but here's another thing you can do with stupid, worthless trees. This little gum tree came off the base, either probably from one of the roots sending up a sucker or from a seed. I noticed this gum tree was growing real fast, and I didn't really have a fruit tree that I wanted to put in here at the time. I was thinking, "You know? This thing would make a pretty good trellis for some yams." These are African yams growing all over the top of it. You can see the little bulbs that they make. These are edible. They also make great big roots below the ground, which are also edible. The sweet gum tree wasn't doing any good for me. I cut the top of it off, and I composted it. You can see that the tree is still alive. That's sweet gum.

This is called pollarding a tree. If you have a tree that has a lot of vigorous growth and you cut it in the winter when it's asleep, it'll grow back again in the spring and take off from wherever you cut it off previously. You see people doing this to Crepe Myrtle trees all the time to make the blooms at a certain level. You can do that over and over again with a tree that would normally be a pest, and then use it for a living trellis, and it creates compost at the same time. Every time you take the top of it off, you can either use that wood to feed a little rocket stove, or you can use it to feed your mulch, or you can just burn it for whatever cooking you want to do if you want to have a campfire of something.

I love this thing for a yam trellis. I think if I have trees pop up in the yard, I start mowing around them, and I just don't let them get so tall and bushy that they're going to shade things out. If they start shading things out, cut the tops off in the winter, use it for something else. You can put a ring of bamboo stakes around this, right to the middle and tie them up there, and make it a bean trellis if you want to. You could grow just about anything on it. You can even put a bird house on the top and let the bluebirds be in the middle of your food forest. Me, I'm growing yams, big, weird yams. ...

Beneath the tranquil surface of this idyllic scene lurks hidden danger. The rich feces of these noble beasts may hide certain death for your garden. Using their manure is like playing Russian roulette with the life of your plants. New and powerful herbicides are now being sprayed on pasture land, hay fields, and grains. These herbicides don't dissipate rapidly. Instead they may stay in the ground for years before breaking down. Even worse, they are taken up by grasses, then consumed by animals, and passed right into their manure. If those deadly droppings go in your garden, your plants are toast. Incredibly well know, handsome, and famous gardening author David the good explains.

A few years ago this happened to me. My new row of thorn-less blackberries started twisting. My papaya trees developed cupped and distorted leaves. My tomatoes, beans, tobacco, and egg plants were destroyed. I lost over a thousand dollars worth of plants that year, not to mention the loss of food for my family. What happened? I got some manure from a local dairy, and they'd sprayed an herbicide called Grazon on their fields to control blackberries, pig weeds, and other so-called weeds. It doesn't kill the grass, but it sure wrecks everything else. It's in manure, it's in hay, and it's in straw. It's all over the place. I can't tell you how many people have told me they've had their entire gardens destroyed, sometimes for years, after applying some supposedly safe manure. Another friend had her organic perennial gardens wrecked after adding some rotten straw as mulch.

If animals are grazing on sprayed land, or eating any hay from the feed store, or if there's bedding straw mixed into your manure, you're at risk. No hay, no straw, no manure is safe, unless you know every aspect of it's production from brought in feed to pasture practices, run away. ...

What we have here is a very cool way to compost. This is called a banana circle. The concept is really simple. Bananas are heavy feeders. They like a lot of water. Put them in a circle around a pit where you put compost, manure, whatever else you have. You can take anything from the beef stew that I always like to mention to beans, to even raw sewage. It doesn't matter. You dig a pit. Say you go about three feet deep. You just start piling stuff in there. You make it basically a compost pit. Then you plant your bananas around the edge of it. Then around the bananas you can plant other plants. One are the plants beyond that bananas that my friend Kathy planted in her banana circle is a lemon. This is a cold, hardier variety called meyer. We're up here in north Florida, and it gets cold, but she's also put these banana trees with along the south wall of this house, so they get some of the thermal mass overnight, and it prevents them from freezing. As you can see, they're actually fruiting.

These bananas actually are a little small, and it's starting to get close to freezing. I'm going to take the end of these blooms off. You can also use this as a vegetable, but it's kind of a pain in the neck to do, so we never do it. By taking the end of it off, we're going to encourage it to make more fruit rather than more blooms and ripen those suckers up. My friend, Joe Pierce, who grows a lot of bananas has also said that peeing at the base of a banana tree is a great way to fertilize it. However, this is a family friendly film. ...

Bananas will eat just about anything you give them. If it's high in nitrogen, if it's stinky, if it's disgusting, whatever else, throw it in the middle here, and you just cover over it with some rough leaves, even the banana leaves as they start to dry out, and they fall, and the blooms fall, and all that kind of stuff. Just throw them right in the center, and just keep covering over, and over, and over again. You're going to have incredible banana trees. You're going to be composting at the same time. You're not going to have to worry about carbon/nitrogen ratios, or turning, or anything else. You're turning your waste directly into bananas. That's cool composting. ...

I'm standing in front of a big pile of fallen trees. This is also at my friend Kathy's house.

This big mess here is going to become a beautiful garden one day. This is called hugelkultur. Basically it's a northern European idea where you take a pile of wood, you cover it over with some dirt, the wood starts to rot in the middle, it becomes compost inside, and it also becomes a reservoir for water. Long-term in this sandy soil for decades in this area, once it's covered over, will be a mounded garden that's pretty much self irrigating and self feeding. I'm going to show you one that Kathy finished earlier this year, and you can see how beautiful it is. Earlier this year this was an ugly pile of sticks.

My friend Kathy keeps bees, so she decided to plant it with a bunch of wildflowers, and edible things, and all kinds of beautiful stuff. There's everything from pollinator plants, to salad greens, to small fruits on here. There are pawpaws. There are gingers. There's celosia, and there's a lot more. It's just going to get better year after year. As you can see it's already beautiful, and this was only planted a couple of months ago. As those logs on the inside soak up water and rot, it just becomes more, and more, and more fertile. This is much better than cutting your tree down and having the tree company haul it away. Look up hugelkultur online. Go check out permies.com, and see what they've done. There's some amazing stuff that you can do with fallen wood, rather than throw it away or just burn it, including making a beautiful garden that will feed your bees and feed you. ...

This here is a little, simple compost tumbler. A lot of folks like these things, because it takes kind of some of the work out of composting, and it's also good for a small space. You can seal it up, open it up, throw in some more stuff, seal it up again, turn in around. It handles the compost creation. The thing I don't like about them is that the capacity is really small. By the time you get to the end of a compost tumbler, you really don't have a lot of compost. It works well, but personally I'd rather just throw it on the ground. I'm just going to spin it again. It is satisfying to spin. I wonder if I could stand on there and ... No. I'm not going to do that. ...

The script says the next thing I'm supposed to do is talk about worm composting. My friend Kathy also made this. If I'm the king of composting, she would definitely be the queen of it. She made this multi-bin system and put worms in it. Eisenia fetida, I think is the name of the worm. They're called red wigglers or tiger worms, because they have stripes, and they're little red guys. They are very efficient composters. They don't smell, and she keeps this in her kitchen. Let's take a look inside. Come on up here. [inaudible 00:28:56]. These beautiful little worms. The great thing about worm casting is it's super rich, it's full of beneficial bacteria and fungi. Just like adding yogurt to your digestive tract, adding worm castings to your garden feeds the soil and gives it the kind of good life, micro-life, that it needs to have. Worms don't like the light, so they tend to retreat away from it. See, down here she's got shredded paper and cardboard. Look at all those worm castings.

These are beautiful. We're going to feed these guys. [inaudible 00:29:45] the yogurt container, recycling, very similar to composting. Find a spot in the corner here and give them all this nice sloppy stuff. You'd be surprised at how fast this disappears, banana peels, bits of pepper. Just cover it back over, so the worms are in a nice dark spot. These

guys are going to get in there, and they are going to absolutely devour it. You don't have to have something beautiful like this to compost with. They make everything from high end worm bins with all kinds of trays, and you keep moving the trays around, and the worms work their way up, and then you get this perfect finished trays with no worms in them, down to just taking a feed trough, or what I did.

I took an old dishwasher, drilled some holes into the bottom for drainage, and put a container underneath it. The reason you want a container underneath it is to catch the worm tea, which is what they call all the moisture that starts to drain out after the worms have eaten and chewed, and eaten and chewed. A lot of the moisture comes out. Basically, worm leaks. Then that becomes some of the best liquid fertilizer you could ever add to your garden. If you have orchids, or you have ornamental, or if you have vegetables, just about anything will benefit from worm tea. You could probably drink it yourself. No. Probably not. You put some drainage on the bottom of something, and you put a container underneath it, you catch the worm tea, you dilute it with water, and then you spray it as a foliar feed, or you can pour it around plants, or you can soak your orchids in it, or whatever you want to do with it.

Later on, to harvest out the worm castings I would just take them and pour them out on a tarp, and start sifting through them, picking the worms out. The worms keep going towards the center to get away from the light if you do it on a sunny day. You can keep kind of sifting it open, they keep going towards the center, and eventually you have a whole bunch of worm castings that you can use in the garden. If a few worms make their way into the garden, well who cares? They're going to help, right? Worm composting doesn't have to be expensive. You can pretty much do it for free. It's just getting the worms that's usually going to cost you, unless you've got a friend that's already got a bin. In that case just go get a handful, add them in, and their population will grow to fill the bin overtime, so long as you keep them fed every week or so and you keep some good shredded carbon material in there. Even your shredder in your office, office paper works well. Soak the water, crumple it up, throw it in there, throw in a handful of worms, throw in some coffee grounds, throw in some kitchen scraps. You're going to have some good worm compost over time. Just kind of another cool way to do it. ...

Some of the most despised creatures on the planet are also some of the best composters. Take for example the vulture. They've been called the best workers the department of transportation has. They give will work for food a whole new meaning. Another creature which tirelessly works to return organic matter to the soil is the ant. Though unwelcome at picnics or on the kitchen counter, they tirelessly carry away everything from dead beetles to cracker crumbs. Flies, or more specifically their loathsome little maggot babies, also break down rotten organic matter like it's going out of style. These maggots are the larvae of the soldier fly, a master composter in its own right. Perhaps the prettiest composting creature also feeds on the most disgusting of meals. This dung beetle is working hard to bury a dog dropping. That's one less for us to step on.

Each of these creatures has been perfectly designed by the creator to dispose of waste

and keep us from being buried in stinking horrors. Rather than hating them, we should celebrate them. Perhaps a giant statue of a maggot would be appropriate, or a commemorative coin featuring a vulture. Though as a human composter you may think you're in lowly company, just remember that your efforts should be valued, right alongside that of the vulture, the ant, the fly, and the dung beetle. Without composters, the whole globe would probably look something like this. ...

Well, I'm doing one of my favorite jobs, which is pulling up the sweet potatoes. The sweet potatoes got so far out of control this year, I don't even know where they started from. I kind of like that. I'm going to have to come out here with a broad fork and just tear through this whole bed. But you know, at the end of it, I'm going to have big piles of vines all over the place. You see all this stuff. We're getting close to freezing, and these are going to die anyways. Normally you might take these things and throw them in the compost pile, put them on top where they're going to dry out, and they're not going to end up re-sprouting and taking over your pile, depending on how mild your climate is. What I like to do is just take them right out of the garden and put them around one of my peach trees. Let's go do that. ...

Now, I've been throwing all kinds of waste around these trees for a couple of years now. These trees are only three years old. I started them from seeds. The thing about seedling peaches is that they're subject to nematode damage. Peaches on their own roots in nematode infested soil often have a hard time. Usually they'll turn around and graft them onto a nematode resistant root stock. However, compost helps drive out nematodes. They don't like high organic matter, and they don't like the fungi that move in. There are some fungi that will actually eat nematodes. By continually dropping organic matter right at the base of these trees I'm hopefully staving off the nematodes. So far, judging by how many peaches we've gotten, it's working. Come here, and take a closer look. Okay. We've got slime mold here on the surface.

We threw down some compost potting soil to just kind of cover the mess, but if you dig down in here we've got eggshells, paper plates, peelings, leaves, and all kinds of stuff. It's a lot of rough stuff. The peach tree really loves it. We're pretty much just making compost right around the peach tree. Again, if you wanted to grow your own compost, I could plant a couple of those giant sunflowers back here or some comfrey or something else, and just chop them down, throw them right around the base of this tree, and I could even do the same with all the cassava that's growing behind this tree at the end of the season when I harvest the roots. That's some really easy composting, so why not turn your old sweet potatoes into peaches? Why not? ...

Well, I'm turning my sweet potatoes into peaches. Walking down the garden path with piles of vines. It's incredible to think of all the humus these vines will leave behind. Yes, behind, because I'm turning vines into sweet potatoes, sweet potato vines into sweet peaches, and that'll chase the nematodes away. Chase them far away. ...

In my video last year for the Homegrown Foods Summit I showed you these hot tub ponds. They're basically just reclaimed hot tubs for water storage, but I use them for compost making machines as well. What I've done is gotten some fast, rapid growing

aquatic plants like these. I don't even know what they are, but when they come out they'll rot, and they'll feed the soil, and they'll drop nitrogen. You can do this with duckweed, all kinds of aquatic plants. You can also do it with the much hated water hyacinth. Water hyacinth is one of the most invasive plants on the planet in aquatic systems.

The state of Florida spends millions of dollars a year trying to eradicate it. However, it's loaded with nutrition, and it's loaded with nitrogen, and as soon as you take it out of the water and throw it on the shore it dies. It starts rotting right where it is, and it turns into compost. If they would just turn around and start scraping this stuff out and start turning it into compost, they could probably make money off of it. You can also feed it to cattle, and people can even eat it when it's prepared properly. We're not going to get rid of the water hyacinth. Why not just grow it in big tubs or pond systems and turn it into some sort of compost? It's going to be around. Just a thought.

This, by the way, if you're a federal agent, is not water hyacinth. This is some sort of duckweed-like plant. I don't know if it's giant duckweed or something else, but it floats and it duplicates multiple times. Also makes a really good compost. It's a good activator, because it's a high green. If you have a big pile, you start throwing this stuff in there in between layers of leaves, and it will rot and get that pile hot. I can scrape half of this pond of this stuff, and throw it in the compost pile probably about every month or so, and it all grows back, duplicates itself. Pretty cool. Grow your own compost. ...

If you were to read regular composting guides, it's pretty much a big list of, "Don't do this. Don't do this. Don't do that. Don't do that. Don't do this. Don't do that." I find that really irritating, because just about anything organic can be returned to the soil. They'll tell you, "Don't compost bread. Don't compost cheese. Don't compost meat." What did nature do before we came up and wrote this big list? All that stuff got composted. Everything can be returned into the soil. I'm going to show you how to safely compost meat, and paper, and bread, and whatever else you want to compost. This is dead simple, and I borrowed this method from the Native Americans. I read about it in Steve Solomon's book. I call it melon pits, because I use this method to grow melons and to grow squashes in the summer. I'm going to show you how I do it.

First thing you do is you dig a pit about three feet deep. ... Now I have a hole, and I have paper plates, and watermelon rinds, and scraps, everything from spaghetti to who knows what. Oh, yeah. Doesn't that look delicious? Then what I did was cleaned out the freezer. I don't even know what this is. I think it's ... Oh, it's bones, some sort of bones for stock. All right. Great. Awesome. What are these? I didn't know we still had these. Look at that. Those are chicken feet. That's cool. Don't know what we were going to do with these. A back scratcher? Now just to top it all off some milk. Spoiled. Look at that. It's chunky milk. Those are called probiotics. Oh, yeah. Come on. You can come out. Chunky bits. It's like cottage cheese in there. Now for those people that say you cannot compost a pizza, you can't compost a placenta, look. It's not that hard. All this stuff rots.

All you got to do, fill it in. I smash it down a bit. I don't want it to be too close to the surface, because I don't want an animal coming and digging it all up. If you know

anything about plant roots, watermelons for instance, in loose soil their roots can reach down to eight foot. When you pull it up you only see that little bit of roots. There are microscopic roots that go way beyond. They just keep going. Tiny little root hairs all over the place. They will find this. Whatever you plant will find this. I actually like to do this usually a couple of months before I plant so this stuff has some time to rot down into the ground. That right there is going to be my melon pit. You want to mark it. If you want to, you can plant it right now. The roots will find it.

I did this in Tennessee the first time. I planted hubbard squash on top of it. I threw in everything from goat organs, to paper plates, hunks of wood, all kinds of junk left over from the kitchen. I planted it. At first the plants looked like every other plant in the garden. They just looked kind of normal, yellowy green leaves, kind of doing all right. Then one day I noticed they were starting to turn deep green. Then they went crazy. They covered the garden area. They fed themselves. They needed hardly any water. They got their roots down into that fertility, and they went crazy. That area was fertile for a couple years afterwards. It's not my idea. Native's came up with it, but I'm just borrowing it, because it works. It also helps you get rid of all the stuff that normally your not allowed to put in your compost pile. Forget that. You can put anything in a hole.

One other thing I didn't tell you about these pits, you can take hunks of log and bury them in here too. I have a friend who actually took a post hole digger, dug a hole, jammed a phone book down in it, planted seeds on top of the phone book. Then he did another hole, and he just put the dirt back into the hole, and he planted seeds on top of that. The seeds that were planted over the phone book grew like crazy, and you can probably guess why. They were able to look up fertilizers. No. Not really. The reason they grew better over that phone book is that phone book filled full of water when he watered it, and it became a source of irrigation for those little plants. If you put some wood, or some paper, whatever else down there, and it gets wet, sopping wet, the seeds that grow on top of it are going to be able to find that moisture, just like they'll find the compost that I put down in there. They're going to grow like crazy.

This method is really cool, particularly if you have a big lawn area. You cut an area, you take the sod out, you make one of these pits. You put in fertility just in that area, instead of having to fertilize a whole garden. You do just that area. You let the vines grow. They grow all over the grass. They start to run the grass over, but they're feasting on the good stuff that's down in there, and it works as a great ground cover. You could even probably do it with some sort of a green manure crop by just planting and letting it take over piece by piece, melon pit by melon pit. ...

I pulled some sweet potatoes out of here about a month ago, and before the weeds come in and take over, I want to make this area beautiful for next year. I have a mix of seeds right here. You've got to see these things up close. There are beans in there, there's herb seeds in there, probably some peas in there, all kinds of different seeds I've gotten from bulk bins. I've got wildflower seeds, a massive diversity of life. The seed packets that I don't use, throw them in here, the old seed packets with lower germination rates. The dollar store does a sale at the end of the year when they put bins of seeds out for a few cents a piece. It all goes in here. Then I can take these seeds ...

and I can add life back on top of the ground.

Soil doesn't like to be uncovered. Put some plant life on it, or you put some mulch on it, and it'll be a lot happier. For the little bit of time we have left before it freezes, the warm stuff will grow and put some roots in the ground, which will turn into compost. Cold weather stuff, the brassicas that I put in here, will grow right through the winter. In the spring, probably some more warm season stuff will come up. All I have to do with this beautiful mix of seeds is just rake it in. People do green manure mixes with clover, and rye, and field peas, and all kinds of different things. I don't sweat it too much. I just mix a wide variety of things together, including nitrogen fixers like beans and peas. I've even done tree seeds mixed in with wild flowers, and shrub seeds, and cassia seeds, and all kinds of other things, and done them in food forest projects.

Anything to get a diversity of plants growing on the ground, a lot of roots into the soil, and something covering up this sand. The organic matter disappears real fast. If you get tired of looking at it, you want to plant another crop, till it under, turn it over with your fork, plant again. Cut little circles in it, plant right into the circles. Keep the plants you want to keep and eat, leave the other ones alone. You get to play like mother nature, and throw thousands of seeds around, and just see what happens. It's exciting, and it's beautiful. There's so many wildflowers that come up, because we do this. It's kind of cool. I enjoy doing it. ...

Oh, you're still here. I hope you enjoyed all the composting. I hope you've seen that composting can be really drop dead easy. It doesn't have to be a big system with all kind of bells and whistles. You don't have to worry about your ratios. You just got to throw things on the ground, return them back to the soil. Be kind of creative in thinking about ways you can put organic material right back in and use that fertility for your plants, rather than throwing it into the waste stream. I also want you to check out my book, *Compost Everything, The Good Guide to Extreme Composting*, published by Castalia House. You can find that on Amazon. I appreciate your time and wish you all the best.

Marjory: That was so much fun. I also want to point out that all those principals, although Dave's in the south, lucky him living in Florida right, but all these things, these principals are the same and useful. For the chop and drop, for composting around trees, using other species, weed species. I do that here in Texas. I know Jerome Osentowski uses it in Colorado. I've had people writing in from all over the place that use that very same method of just compost in place type. In fact, we grow things just to have them drop. Almost all of these principals are useful anywhere else. Don't get stuck on, "Oh. He's got it so easy. He's in Florida." If you're also interesting, if you want to go more in depth on composting, we have another one that's just focused on worm composting by Ralph Rhodes. You be sure to check out that one.

Also, we have another blogger for The Grow Network is captain Dave, who has a presentation on predicting the weather, for homesteaders, hikers, and preppers. That's a really good one. Both Dave's kind o have a funny thing, and captain Dave was saying, "Marjory, if he's called Dave the good, I think I want to be called David the naughty." It

was pretty funny. Anyway, catch some of those other presentations. This is The Homegrown Food Summit. Marjory Wildcraft, and I'll check you out on the next one.