

Janet B. Carson
Extension Horticulture Specialist
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As a child raised in the 1960's we were told to clean our plates and think about those starving children in Africa. Offers to send the pickled beets or cooked cauliflower to those in need were not met with the same sincerity with which it was given. That being said, we did not waste food. Our parents and grandparents were products of the depression and "waste not, want not" was a mantra. Looking back this didn't just apply to food. We took care of everything we owned and valued what we had.

Times have changed. Children today or adults for that matter, don't have to eat everything on their plates--in fact are often encouraged not to. Ordering huge quantities of food at restaurants and leaving half of it behind is commonplace. According to a recent report from the World Resources Institute about one-third of all food produced worldwide gets lost or wasted in food production and consumption systems.

It is mind-boggling that according to the National Resources Defense Council, 40% of the food supply in the United States is not eaten--it is either thrown away, put down the garbage disposal or never harvested, while 1 in 8 American families struggles to put food on the table. Something is mixed up in that scenario.

Have we become a nation of waste? As a child, milk was delivered in glass bottles at our door. The milkman brought us milk and took back the empty bottles to be reused. The few times we had soda, it came in bottles that also got returned to the store. Appliances were built to last a lifetime. Now our milk is in disposable plastic, soda is in cans or plastic bottles and if an appliance lasts us ten years we celebrate. The August 1955 issue of *Life* magazine featured an article on "Throwaway Living". It claimed that the height of modern living was to use something once and then throw it away. It was not seen as wasteful, but it was considered modern living and it was easy and convenient.

We live in a fast-paced world where convenience is key and disposable is considered normal. Prior to the 20th century the amount of waste generated by a household was relatively small. Household waste was often buried in the garden or burned. As cities grew and populations grew refuse became an issue. Landfills began to be built in the 1920's with little regulation or thought about long-term effects. In 1959 the American Society of Civil Engineers published a guide to landfills recommending compacting the trash and layering it with soil to guard against odor. Today all landfills are regulated by federal and state laws. In 1965 the Solid Waste Disposal Act was passed by Congress recognizing trash was becoming a national issue. The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act was enacted in Congress to protect human health and the environment. Trash is big business and an ever growing one.

While we have continued to embrace disposability instead of throwing everything in the trash to go to the landfill, today there is a huge emphasis on the three R's--reduce, reuse and recycle. There are more than 10,000 recycling centers nationwide and at least 4,000 curbside collection programs. Curbside recycling of glass, paper, aluminum and plastic is commonplace. Yard waste is now picked up by most local municipalities, so overall a lot less is going into landfills.

As Americans continue to generate large volumes of trash, the next frontier for recycling is food waste. Many consumers feel good that they are doing their part for the environment by recycling cardboard and aluminum, but don't give a thought to all the food that is thrown away. In the US, organic waste is the second highest component of landfills. Food recycling programs are beginning to appear in cities and states across the country. Recycling food is not commonplace, nor it is inexpensive or easy on a large scale, yet communities across the country are looking at feasible options. Wal-Mart and Sam's clubs began working with Quest Recycling Services in 2009 to not only recycle food waste into animal feed or compost, but also to recycle used cooking oil into biofuel or animal feed and unsold meat and seafood into animal feed additives. In 2014, The Wall Street Journal reported that Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York already have laws requiring certain businesses to separate food waste from regular trash, and states such as Vermont have similar plans to require food recycling by 2020, and more laws are coming.

What is being done in Arkansas? There are a multitude of nonprofits and organizations working on sustainability, with community gardens, food recovery and hunger relief. Unfortunately they are scattered all over the state with no big umbrella organization that coordinates all efforts, but good things are happening. Arkansas Sustainability Network (ASN) is a non-profit educational organization begun in 2006 whose mission is to develop more sustainable communities. The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance (the Alliance) and the Society of St. Andrew (SoSA) have partnered to form a gleaning network within the state of Arkansas. Gleaning is the practice of hand-gathering crops left after harvest. The Alliance and SoSA volunteers glean fields and orchards donated by growers. The produce is then given to Feeding America member food banks, local pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters that feed or distribute food to their neighbors in need. The Alliance and its members serve over 900 hunger relief organizations in all 75 Arkansas counties. Since the program began, more than 8.5 million pounds of fresh produce has been gleaned from Arkansas fields.

The Center for Agricultural and Rural Sustainability (CARS) has a broad responsibility in research, teaching, and extension with respect to different aspects of agricultural and rural sustainability. The projects carried out by the Center faculty are diverse covering all major areas of agricultural production including specialty crops and local foods. Their work provides support to the agricultural industries and rural communities to build sustainable, "green" agriculture in the State.

Last July the Arkansas Recycling Coalition held a Food Waste workshop in central Arkansas to look at ideas on reducing food waste. Composting at home is encouraged, and while there are many folks composting, many more don't have the time nor the

inclination to do so. In San Francisco curbside recycling of 600 tons a week of compostable material is picked up each day. But few cities are offering this service. Private door-to-door composting companies are popping up all over the country from Washington D.C.'s Compost Cab to Compost Now in North Carolina and at least one company has sprung up in central Arkansas who will do consumer pick-up of food waste once a week and give you back compost in return.

The Urban Food Loop, owned by Read Admire and Claire Hodgson has partnered with Heifer International and has secured a site on the Heifer Urban Farm where they are composting food waste. Folks in Little Rock and surrounding areas can subscribe to this service. Once you register, subscribers are given a crock to keep in their kitchen, and one or two 5 gallon plastic buckets with secure lids. Instead of throwing away the food that goes bad or is not eaten, or putting it down the disposal, you can help turn it into reusable compost. Food scraps are collected in the buckets all week, with everything from vegetables and baked goods to meat and cheese. Once a week, the full plastic buckets are picked up outside your door and clean ones are left. The food waste is then mixed with leaves and straw, whey from Kent Walker cheese, coffee grounds from a local coffee business and fruit pulp from a smoothie restaurant. The end results are pretty impressive compost. Once a year they will deliver up to ten bags of the compost that is produced. If you don't garden, they will gladly donate the compost to a local community garden. The cost for this service is only \$1 a day or \$31 dollars a month. Statistics show that with these door-to-door composting companies 1/3 less trash is generated by each subscriber, reducing overall what goes into the landfill.

One door-to-door program for the whole state is not enough, but it is a step in the right direction. Change doesn't happen overnight. There are a lot of foodies and locavores who are really getting into the local food movement, and are working on solutions to food production, distribution and waste, but many of the conferences and conversations are preaching to the choir--people already engaged and involved. It is time to move beyond the dedicated and start on the sporadically motivated and vaguely concerned group and work to create a network of food citizens. If everyone does just a little, it will make a difference, and one small step will lead to bigger things. The best way to manage food waste is to not produce it. Some other strategies are to buy only what you need and learn how to properly cook it and store it and if there are leftovers, use them or repurpose them.