http://www.kidsforfuture.net/ourfuture/000046.html

How We Can Avoid Turning Our Earth into 'Garbage Planet'

Would you like to try an interesting experiment with garbage? Get a bag made of net and put all sorts of garbage into it, such as vegetable scraps, fish bones, a tissue, a candy wrapper, cracker box, an empty can and wrapping paper. Make a list of what you put inside. You might even take some photos as a record.Next, dig a hole in your backyard and bury the bag full of garbage in the hole. You might want to cover the hole with a few heavy stones so that it won't get dug by a dog or cat. After about a week or two, dig up the bag to see what has happened to the garbage. In this experiment, you can find out which garbage items turn into dirt and which ones don't. Look carefully to learn if, for example, plastic bottles, plastic containers, cling wrap or foil can be put in the category of "garbage that can turn into dirt." What do you think? If you said "No," then you are correct. Old sandals, washing machine drain pipes, broken down computers and erasers are in fact originally made from petroleum, a resource found deep below the earth by drilling what are called "oil wells."

These garbage items made from petroleum won't turn into dirt even after thousands of years. This is because they are made from resources that weren't originally found on the earth and so they aren't part of the cycle of living things in the earth's natural recycling system. What do you think will happen if we continue to dig out more and more petroleum to make plastic bags, bottles and other products only to be thrown away after being used only once? Many say that we will run out of petroleum in about 40 years. Unless proper methods are used, toxic (harmful) chemicals called dioxins can be released into the air that we breathe when garbage is burned. This has become a serious problem in recent years. So, in that case, you might be wondering, "What's wrong with burying the garbage?" Well, burving the garbage has limitations. For example, in Japan the land is overpopulated and the available landfill area can only sustain the people of that country for a few more years. What happens then? No matter how big the world is, we can't continue to bury garbage that doesn't turn into dirt. Imagine that in the distant future, creatures from outer space come and see the earth, and say disappointedly, "We had heard the earth was a beautiful blue planet. But actually, it's just an ugly Garbage Planet." You wouldn't want them to say that about our earth, would you?

www.kidsforfuture.net/ourfuture/000037.html

Garbage That Returns to the Earth

We humans create a huge amount of garbage in our daily activities. "What kind of garbage?" you might ask. Well, in Japan, for example, garbage is sorted and collected in the categories of "Burnable," "Unburnable," "Large-sized (Bulk) Garbage" and "Recyclable Garbage." But let's take a look at all the things we toss out from a different angle. How about a category called "Natural Garbage"? In other words, the type of garbage that turns into dirt after being left in the soil for some time, where it is decomposed, or broken down into fine earth by bacteria and other organisms. Among the kinds of trash we toss out each day, what kind of items could go into this category?

You guessed it! With help from worms and bacteria, kitchen litter, such as fish bones, vegetable scraps and leftover rice are items that will "return to the earth" after some time. Do you know what a compost bin is? It's a container in which you can put leaves, weeds and kitchen litter and add worms and bacteria to decompose them.

In a compost bin, your vegetable scraps and leftovers turn into fertilizer, or in other words, a rich soil that helps plants grow! If you have a flower bed or vegetable garden, you can easily try this form of recycling--turning garbage into nutrients--by yourself. Very

conveniently, by composting, you can take care of two tasks with one move: Get rid of kitchen litter and make your own fertilizer for free.

In America, worm composting has recently become popular--through the mail, you can order a jar of earthworms. And since America is such a huge country, a lot of these jars are delivered by air. Earthworms flying all over the country! What a funny thought!

Waste from toilets can be recycled, too. Human waste (also called "night soil") is the left over product from food and liquid taken into our bodies. But once it's collected, if it's left untreated in a location where many people live, it would produce germs and attract flies and could cause people to get sick. That's why typically it's flushed from toilets into septic tanks or treatment centers and is disposed properly by incineration, or by burning it until it turns to ash.

But in fact, this human waste can be used as fertilizer, too, so it's a shame that it all ends up in ashes at these sewage facilities. As in the olden days, some communities even today have been using human waste to make nutritious soil for growing crops with the help of farmers.

Now you know about returning human waste and food scraps to the earth. But some of you might not even have space outside your home for a compost bin. Or for that matter, a vegetable garden on which to use fertilizer.

But even still, you can do a lot of things to reduce kitchen litter. For starters, you should make an effort not to buy more than you need. Next, try to make the most of your food in your cooking. A Japanese side dish called kimpira, a stir-fried vegetable dish, makes good use of the peels and skin of certain vegetables. Also, to reduce the amount of daily kitchen litter, you should drain as much water as possible from your food scraps before tossing them into the garbage. Finally, be sure to eat up everything on your plate!