
Bokashi Composting System: A Faster Way Of Eco-Friendly Gardening

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From Earth911's Leon Kaye:

While [composting](#) has become more mainstream, not everyone has access to the space necessary for the maintenance of a composting bin.

Apartment dwellers and residents who live in condominium developments that have more rules than sense are a few examples of where composting is logistically difficult. And while more municipalities are allowing food waste to be included in green waste, that practice still has a while to scale. But a composting process with origins in Korea and now used in Japan for 30 years offers an option for the sustainable disposal of food waste.

Bokashi is a method of composting that can work for people who already live as green as possible in their small space but have no option to eliminate those pesky food scraps.

[Bokashi composting](#) is an effective, seamless and quick way to compost food waste in one's home. In Japanese, Bokashi means "fermented organic matter." Technically, the process is more fermentation than actual composting. Bokashi uses a particular group of microorganisms to anaerobically break down food waste. One advantage of the Bokashi system is that it can break down foods like meat, fish

and dairy products that not only give off a rancid smell, but take a long time to break down. If done correctly, Bokashi can result in compost in as little as two weeks, depending on the local climate and soil biology.

[Give Your Trash Can a Break: Wow, I Can Compost That?](#)

Another key to Bokashi's success in the creation of compost is the wheat bran that is included in a composting kit. When opening the bag, the bran smells sweet like molasses. That sweetness soon turns into a mild pickled odor that is barely noticeable. Furthermore, the entire process occurs in an enclosed bin, which not only prevents odors from leaking, but also prevents rodents and other pests like insects from stealing your compost for dinner.

[Layering](#) is an important step in the Bokashi process. After an inch or so food scraps is spread in the bucket, users just need to sprinkle the bran on the food scraps. The process continues until the bin is full. Meanwhile any water that collects in the bin can be drained, diluted and poured into the ground to fertilized plants. Undiluted liquid can clear sink drains or septic systems. Once the fermented matter is ready, the compost can be added to a garden. The one caveat is that the finished product must be buried in order for it to turn into humus that in turn will revive the soil.

I saw Bokashi in action in the Middle East. During a trip to Dubai, I met Annette Duke, an administrative assistant at an international school. Long passionate about the environment but frustrated with few options to compost or recycle, Duke purchased a Bokashi kit through a [local retailer](#). Composting is

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a huge challenge in Dubai in part because of the determined desert rats that will demolish a compost bin in a heartbeat.

[Related: Making Progress in Dubai's Recycling Desert](#)

The extreme summer heat is also not conducive to composting. Then add the fact that most of Dubai's environment is artificial: gardens in homes like the one in which Duke lives require massive amounts of top soil to be hauled in and spread above the desert sand.

But for Duke, the Bokashi process works and is a step in making her home a touch more sustainable. Now she and her husband, Paul Leslie, an educator at a local university, are composting and fermenting everything from tea bags to date pits to coffee grounds. And now she is creating a small cottage industry as she has her friends who live in apartments Bokashi so her garden of drought resistant grasses and flowers can thrive.

[Take Composting to the Next Level: Poetree Planter Offers Green Burial Alternative](#)

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