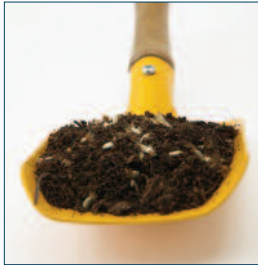




Composting

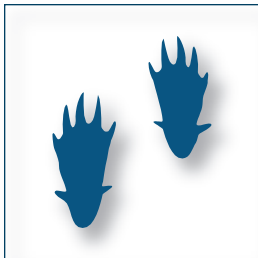
An Environmental Solution for Yard and Household Waste



Compost is easy to make and helps protect our environment! Read this newsletter to find out how to start today!



Rain gardens are an easy way to enhance your backyard and help the environment.



Read inside to find out more about this native animal called the "swamp bunny."

Composting is something that everyone can do in their own household to recycle yard and household wastes and keep them out of landfills. Composting speeds up the breakdown of wastes by providing an ideal environment for bacteria and other decomposing microorganisms to live and work. The final product, compost, can be added to transform any soil and naturally provides vital nutrients to help plants grow and thrive.

To start composting on your own, you first must set-up an outside container to house your compost as it is being created. There are many types of containers that you can buy or build. For the most simple, you can make a bin by using a metal or plastic bucket or trash can that has been drilled with 1/4 inch holes underneath to increase the flow of air and moisture. If you wish to purchase a compost bin, they are available at most garden or

hardware stores in either metal or plastic and do not require a large investment.

Next, it is important to find a place on your property for your container that has good drainage and is away from direct sunlight. Start the bottom of your compost bin with a layer of coarse material like twigs, straw or leaves. Continue by adding a layer of dry grass clippings and leaves (preferably chopped), mixed with kitchen waste like egg shells, fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds or tea bags. Finish by covering with a one inch layer of soil and enough water so the soil is as moist as a damp sponge. Add more materials as they become available, taking care not to make any one layer of the same type of material thicker than 6 inches.

continued on page 2

**Appoquinimink
River Association**

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Composting is a great way to use household wastes to make your garden flourish!

Compost

Continued from page 1

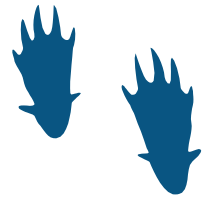
Many materials can be added to a compost pile, including leaves, grass clippings, garden plants, old potting soil, straw, woody brush, vegetable and fruit scraps, coffee grounds and filters, crushed egg shells, tea bags, sawdust, tissues, paper towels and shredded paper. Avoid using diseased plants, meat scraps that may attract animals, bones, fish, dairy products, oils/grease, sauces, plastics, metals, glass, stone and dog or cat manure which carry disease. Turn the mixture on a regular basis (weekly or bi-weekly) to provide air space. You can also poke the mixture to create pores. The more the materials are turned, the faster the decomposition will occur. Keep the pile moist but not soggy. Your compost pile will naturally heat up and decrease in volume as the material inside decomposes. When the material inside turns dark brown, smells sweet, is cool and crumbly, it is ready for use. Remove the material from the bottom of the pile and use on your gardens.

Where do you have outdoor fun in southern New Castle County?

We all know the beauty and diversity of natural settings in our watersheds, but where are the best places for the public to enjoy this bounty? If you have some favorite recreational haunts, please contact us (info@apporiver.org) with these locations and your preferred activities. Where is the best place to walk your dog, take photographs, spot wildlife, enjoy the stars, go paddling, take a hike, share nature with children, hunt and fish, or simply enjoy the view? We'll be using this information for an upcoming recreation page we're adding to our webpage!

Critter Corner

Muskrat



The muskrat is nicknamed the “swamp bunny” because it lives in wetlands, ponds, lakes, marshes and river banks.

Often confused with the beaver, the muskrat builds a similar looking home only much smaller. The house is usually only for one individual, although several may live together, except during the breeding season. Sometimes rather than building a house, the muskrat burrows into the bank along the water's edge and constructs a bank den with several entrances, usually below water level. While a house commonly contains one nesting chamber with one or more underwater entrances, a bank den may have several chambers, each with one or more tunnels leading underwater.

Jane Mruk



Musk rats also have many interesting characteristics that help them become excellent swimmers like the beaver. Their nostrils look like the number seven

which allow them to inhale the remaining oxygen from the recently exhaled breath. This allows them to swim underwater for up to 15 minutes. In addition, its mouth closes behind protruding teeth allowing it to chew underwater.

Musk rats get their name because the male muskrat marks his territory with a strong musky secretion from the underside of its flattened tail. This warns other muskrats when a territory is already occupied. Until the decline of the fur industry, muskrat fur was considered extremely desirable because it is durable and waterproof. Also, muskrat meat is still favored as a delicacy in some parts of Delaware.

2nd Annual Natural Wonders Photography Contest

Deadline Coming up on April 29 – So Hurry!

We had great success with last year's Natural Wonders Photography Contest and are looking forward to the wonderful photographs we will have entered this year! But hurry because the deadline for submission is April 29! Check out our website www.apporiver.org for all the rules and details!

Rain Gardens for the Bays

A New Campaign to Protect Our Waterways in Your Backyards

The new Rain Gardens for the Bays campaign is greening our neighborhoods and protecting our streams and bays by creating thousands of rain gardens in local watersheds! The campaign is supported by the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, the Center for the Inland Bays, the Maryland Coastal Bays and many other state and local organizations. These groups are collaborating to encourage healthier bays by creating thousands of rain gardens in our backyards,



school campuses, town halls, libraries, local businesses and on our corporate lands.

Planting a rain garden is your personal contribution to cleaner water. Together, through the Rain Gardens

for the Bays Campaign, thousands of rain gardens will add up to bring tremendous benefits to you and your watershed! Work with your local watershed association, municipality, school, and workplace to create rain gardens where you work, live and play. Join the Rain Gardens for the Bays Campaign to keep our waters healthy and protect our communities from flooding and polluted runoff during storms. Visit www.raingardensforthebays.org to learn more about the campaign and how to create your own rain garden.



Come out and visit the Blackbird Reserve to see this newly installed rain garden!

What is a rain garden?

A rain garden is a garden designed as a shallow depression to collect water that runs off from your roof, driveway and other paved areas. The soil and plants absorb the water and filter pollutants. The garden slows down and reduces the volume of rainfall runoff before it enters the stormwater system.

A rain garden provides not only beauty and habitat for our favorite songbirds and butterflies but conserves precious water supplies and downstream drinking water sources, and protects the water quality necessary to support our economy, recreation, tourism, agricultural and industry. Rain Gardens help keep water clean by filtering stormwater runoff before it enters the local waterways or storm management systems and also help promote the recharge of our drinking water sources.

Jane Mruk



Blue Flag Iris

We Have a New Facebook Page

You're going to like it!

All you Facebook addicts, check out the NEW Appoquinimink River Association Facebook page! Get on www.facebook.com and search for Appoquinimink River Association. Click on the "like" link and start receiving all the great updates and informational facts we have to offer! Or if you would prefer, **click here** to go directly to the Appoquinimink River Association's Facebook page from this newsletter.

Just for Fun

Naturally Fun Eggs

(from Puddles and Wings and Grapevine Swings by Forte and Frank)

What You Need:

- Eggs
- Lacy leaves
(Cut tissue paper ones
if you can't get real ones)
- Old nylon pantyhose or
cheese cloth
- Outer skins from an onion
- Pan
- Water
- Hot plate or stove

What to Do:

1. Collect some fancy leaves (the lacier the leaves, the prettier your eggs will be) like geranium, parsley, or ivy. Wash and dry them.
2. Cut old pantyhose or cheese cloth into circles big enough to wrap the eggs in. Cut additional strips to tie the cloth around the egg.
3. Place the leaves on the eggs to form a design. Hold them in place and tie the eggs in the pantyhose/cheese cloth circles you previously cut. Gather the top and tie it tightly with a tying strip. Tie in a bow rather than in a knot so that it can be easily untied when the eggs are done.
4. Put the eggs in a pan and cover them with water. Put three or four onion skins in the water.
5. Bring the water to a boil, and simmer the eggs on low heat for fifteen minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and allow to cool in the pan.
6. Unwrap the eggs and admire the lacy leaf designs on your eggs!



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