

# Bokashi composting gains popularity

By Kevin Groenhagen

As an editor and publisher, I spend most of my workday at a desk. I realized last winter that I needed to find an activity to get me a way from the computer. I decided to take up gardening.

With a new garden in the yard, I started to think about soil amendments and composting. Living in the city, I didn't think the neighbors would care much for a large compost bin in my yard. Searching for an alternative, I learned about bokashi composting.

"Bokashi" is the Japanese word for "fermented organic matter." While it is relatively unknown in this country, it has been gaining popularity in Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and other countries. In the city of Pusan, South Korea, more than three million residents use bokashi composting since the city does not allow organics in its landfills.

With bokashi composting, you simply place your vegetable and fruit peelings, used tea bags, coffee grounds, and other organics in a bucket, cover each layer of organics with a handful of bokashi, and place

an airtight lid on the bucket. You repeat this process until you have a full bucket. Once full, you let the contents "ferment" for about two weeks.

After the organics have fermented, find a spot in your yard or garden to bury the fermented organics. When you remove the lid, you might notice a bit of mold growing on top of the organics. This is all right as long as your organics did not rot and there is not a putrid odor. The organics should have a sweet and sour fermented smell. The odor reminds me of silage.

Bury the organics at least six inches in the soil. Our neighbor's dog is attracted to the odor, so I place

cinder blocks on top of the buried organics to keep her from digging them up.

With the combination of microorganisms and worms, the organic waste usually breaks down after just two weeks.

During this winter, I have been burying my fermented organic waste in my 4' x 8' raised garden. When I plant in the garden this spring, I'll bury the waste in another spot in the yard. The composted soil from this spot can be dug up at a latter time and used in the garden or in plant containers.

Bokashi buckets are available online, but they can be costly. I checked on eBay while writing this article

and a bucket and three-pound bag of bokashi cost \$70 when shipping was included. In order to do bokashi composting, you really need to have at least two buckets so you have a second bucket to fill while the contents of the first, full bucket is fermenting. A 240 ml bottle of beneficial microbes to make bokashi costs about \$20 after shipping is added.

You can make your own buckets, mix your own bokashi, and "brew" your own microbes, and save money. At right, I have included instructions for making a bokashi bucket.

A good recipe for bokashi is avail-

■ CONTINUED ON PAGE SEVEN

## Lawrence Funeral Chapel

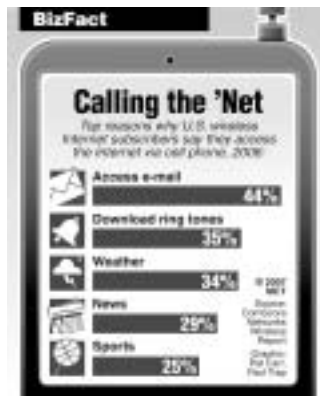
**Mortuary and Cremation Services**  
841-3822 • 6th & Monterey Way

[www.lawrencefuneralchapelinc.com](http://www.lawrencefuneralchapelinc.com) • [www.huttonmonuments.com](http://www.huttonmonuments.com)

Locally Owned  
and Operated



*Beginning Our 6th Year of Service!*



**Kaw Valley  
Senior Monthly**  
accepts

**INSERTS!**

We can insert your  
circulars or flyers for  
just \$45 per 1,000.  
Call 785-841-9417  
for more information.

# Hutton

## MONUMENTS, INC.

Serving Kansas since 1873

### Complete Range of Styles for Your Selection

**201 SW Topeka Blvd. • Topeka • 785-354-7005**

Visit our new web site: [www.huttonmonuments.com](http://www.huttonmonuments.com)

Locations in: Lawrence, Hiawatha, Highland, Holton,  
Horton, Hoyt, Meriden, Onaga & Oskaloosa





# Bokashi

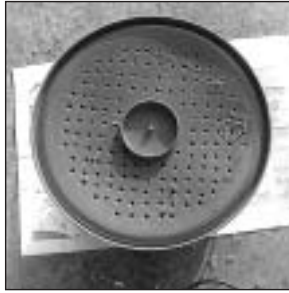
■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE SIX

able online at [www.cityfarmer.org/bokashi.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/bokashi.html).

I started brewing my own microbes for bokashi after reading a paper on Effective Microorganisms (EM) by Professor Teuro Higa. Higa's EM is a propriety formula. However, the formula includes yeasts and lactic acid bacteria, and the pH of the solution must be below 3.5. To me, this sounded very similar to "kombucha," which is a fermented, sweetened tea made with a kombucha "mushroom." The mushroom is actually a "Symbiotic Colony of Yeast and Bacteria," or a SCOBY. Millions of people in Asia drink kombucha, which supposedly has many health benefits.

I ordered my SCOBY on eBay, found a kombucha recipe online, and substituted molasses for sugar. I lacked the courage to drink the tea, but found that it worked quite well for bokashi. The only problem I had was I produced more tea than I needed. Therefore, if you brew your own tea for bokashi, you may want to do so in conjunction with several other families.

## Make Your Own Bokashi Bucket



Start with two 5-gallon buckets. Make sure one fits snugly into the other. Drill holes into the bottom of bucket #1.



Add a spigot no more than 1.5" from the bottom of bucket #2. See the barrel tap spigot at [www.usplastic.com](http://www.usplastic.com). I snip off part of the nozzle.



Place bucket #1 into bucket #2. An airtight lid must be used with bucket #1 and removed only when kitchen waste is added. I use gamma seal lids.



Add kitchen waste and cover each layer with a handful of bokashi until the bucket is full.



While the waste is fermenting, liquids will seep through the holes in the bottom of bucket #1. The liquids must be drained from bucket #2 as needed.



After about 10 days of fermenting, your compost can be buried in your yard or garden.

## ADVANCED HOMECARE

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT RENTAL AND SALES

- Home Oxygen; CPAPS; BIPAPS
- Power Scooters, Wheelchairs, Walkers, Canes
- Seat Lift Chairs, Hospital Beds
- Free Delivery & In-Home Setup
- Mastectomy Products & Many Daily Living Needs
- We Bill: Medicare, Medicaid & Private Insurance



### 785-841-2200

2500 W 31<sup>st</sup> Lawrence  
1 1/2 BLKS WEST OF 31ST & IOWA  
EASY ACCESS FROM K-10 BYPASS

24 Hour Emergency Service 1-800-827-9406

*Let's build a city our grandchildren will love.*

It has been an honor to serve on our City Commission for the last four years and as your mayor in 2005/2006. I have tried to listen, be fair and make decisions in the best long-term interests of the entire city.

I would appreciate the opportunity to work for you for one more term.

Lawrence is a great community, thanks to the efforts of many, many people, past and present. Lawrence can be an *even greater* community in the future.



Re-elect

Dennis  
**BOOG  
Highberger**  
Commissioner

[www.voteboog.com](http://www.voteboog.com)

Political advertisement • Re-elect Dennis "Boog" Highberger • Eric Farnsworth, Texas