

[https://www.redandblack.com/uganews/components-of-compost-sustainability-interns-gather-uga-compost-for-ugarden/article\\_801de97c-45e5-11e8-a291-478ebcfb0ccf.html](https://www.redandblack.com/uganews/components-of-compost-sustainability-interns-gather-uga-compost-for-ugarden/article_801de97c-45e5-11e8-a291-478ebcfb0ccf.html)

## Components of Compost: Sustainability interns gather UGA compost for UGArden use

Ashley Soriano | Staff Writer   Apr 22, 2018

Compost and recycling bins are scattered throughout the UGArden South by South Milledge event in Athens, Georgia, on Thursday, April 19, 2018. (Photo/Gabriella Audi)

Helping the environment doesn't only happen on Earth Day. For some, it's an everyday effort.

Jill Blackmon and Mallory Warren intern in the Office of Sustainability at the University of Georgia, which requires multiple hours of their day throughout the week to be dedicated to helping the environment.

Their role? Picking up rotting food from all parts of campus.



These two interns work in the compost program and ride electric bikes up and down the streets of campus with a trailer tagging along behind them.

This trailer carries composting bins which are distributed throughout campus in various buildings. There are 56 out of 465 buildings on campus that have composting bins, totaling 94 bins on campus, Blackmon said.

The interns provide and gather the composting bins from as far as Milledge Avenue and Riverbend Road, Blackmon said.

The food waste and other compostables retrieved are then taken to the dining halls, which in turn take the compostables to the UGA Bioconversion Center, an industrial-sized facility, located near UGArden.



The goal is to turn food scraps, such as coffee grounds or fruit carcasses, into something reusable, such as soil fertilizer.

“By converting food waste into compost, we’re helping to grow plants and food without having to use chemical fertilizer, so it’s a good substitute for that,” said Warren, a junior environmental and economics management major from Taylorsville.

The fertilizer that the compostables are turned into at the UGA Bioconversion Center are then used at UGA green spaces, such as UGArden.

## No, it's compost

“Compost used at UGArden, for example, helps to grow wholesome produce that is delivered to community members in need,” said Kevin Kirsche, director of the Office of Sustainability.

Composting is different from recycling. This is a common misconception Blackmon hears.

“A lot of people come up to me and go, ‘You’re doing your recycling again?’” said Blackmon, an environmental engineering major from Atlanta.

But recycling and composting serve different purposes.

Composting turns biodegradable items, such as food products, into something that can be reused, whereas recycling turns non-biodegradable items, such as metal or plastic, into reusable items. The exception is cardboard and paper, which are biodegradable, compostable and recyclable. Typically, recyclable items are not biodegradable.

---

### Tips and tricks of composting

**Compostable items:** Coffee grounds, bones, meat, dairy products, paper towels, napkins, food scraps in general

**Recyclable items:** Metal, tin, cardboard, paper, plastic containers, glass bottles and jars

**NON-recyclable items:** Plastic straws, bottle caps, coffee cups, food, plastic bags, styrofoam, napkins or paper towels

**Compostable AND recyclable:** Cardboard, paper

Trash that piles up in landfills creates methane gas, a greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. By composting, people are preventing additional greenhouse gases and climate change, Blackmon said.

Ad



## Save your scraps

“Composting can divert a significant amount of waste from the landfill and create a valuable, nutrient-rich soil amendment. It’s a way to meet two needs with one deed,” Kirsche said.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 20 to 30 percent of what is thrown away should be composted instead.

“UGA composts all landscape debris and all organic materials from UGA dining halls, which equals more than 800 tons of materials each year,” Kirsche said.

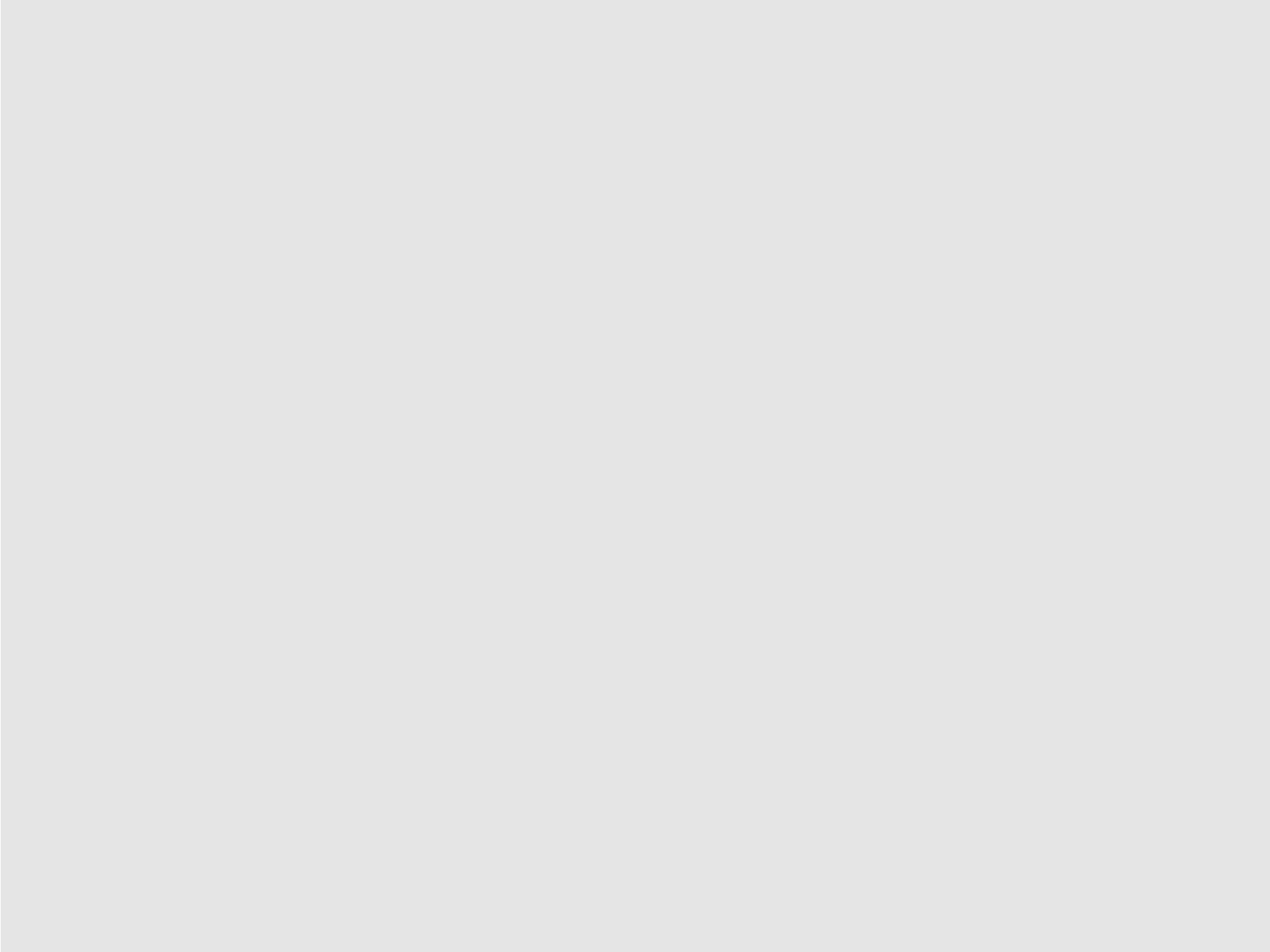
Only some bins on campus are accessible to students. Student-accessible composting bins are in the psychology and ecology buildings and in Rutherford Hall.

If students want a bin in their building, Blackmon suggests they talk to staff members so the Office of Sustainability can coordinate for a bin to be placed in that location.

Blackmon, Warren and Kirsche all suggest finding the composting bins around campus and throwing food scraps into those.

In recycling, the process requires that all food materials are removed from the recyclable items. When separating food from recyclables, people often throw the food away, when really it could be composted.

This extra step makes recycling more sustainable, said Kristen Baskin, owner of Let Us Compost.



Let Us Compost is a local Athens business striving to make composting more of an accessible service for residents of Athens, Watkinsville and even some parts of Atlanta.

Courtesy of Let Us Compost Instagram page



Let Us Compost is a local composting subscription service. The service costs \$25 and provides composting bins to residents and businesses in Athens and the surrounding area. The cost also covers curbside pickup, similar to trash services.

Barberitos, 1000 Faces Coffee and Creature Comforts are a few of the local businesses that compost.

The two UGA interns also suggest students should look into a service such as Let Us Compost.



Office of Sustainability finds decreased energy use among UGA's 2017 accomplishments





Running toward sustainability: Fifth Annual Fun Run comes to the Botanical Gardens





Steps to sustainability: UGA's initiatives to be a greener campus





📷 +4

Reducing & Recycling: Green business and waste department talk composting in Athens



📷 +3

Sustaining futures: Office of Sustainability recognizes students, faculty





📷 +5

Goats wanted: UGA Office of Sustainability seeks new Chew Crew herd to manage invasive species on campus





Creature Comforts releases new beer, launches art-centric initiative

Wishful recycling turns wasteful: Athens-Clarke County warns of recycling contaminants



The plastic bag predicament: Potential law discouraging plastic bags creates controversy



UGA launches agriculture certificate for data science this fall