

The John Ernest Foundation

**YES**

Youth Environmental Scholarship

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**Abstract:**

### **Compost Barrels**

In a time of increasing eco awareness, where global warming is being splashed across every major media outlet, it is hard for the average person to step back and ask what it is they alone can do to help the planet. The notion that our government needs to take initiative to rectify our current ecological problems is a common misconception. In reality it is not up to the government to rectify this situation, but to us, the individual, the private citizen. While the government does have the power to help reduce pollution levels and provide funding to eco-related groups, its hands are bound by the constraints of bureaucracy. It is for this reason that the people should not stand idle, bleating like sheep at the government, but contemplate what they can do to ameliorate the situation at hand. This is not a call for the average person to think of how they can single-handedly halt pollution and global warming, but a way they can be less a part of it.

When one wraps their head around the concept of ameliorating the situation and not stopping it completely, they can find small ways to cut back on their waste pollution that will spread to others. An example of this is my Grandparents. My Grandparents

recently moved from Campbell to a small town in the lower Sierras surrounded by majestic pine forests overlooking a magnificent lake. Although while they lived in Campbell they made little or no steps towards cutting back on the pollution and waste they created, when surrounded by nature's beauty in the Sierras they began to become more eco-friendly. The way that stood out the most was two awkward looking black containers sitting idly on the side of their house which I later discovered to be compost barrels. What they would do is put food, paper, and any other degradable materials into these barrels and let them decompose. After a month or two, the final product is mineral rich dirt. Upon seeing these compost barrels, my family bought two for ourselves. We used them over the summer and completed three cycles spreading each one throughout our garden. Using this new soil for our garden will prove interesting next time we plant to see if there is a difference in the quality and size of the vegetables produced.

While using compost barrels can be used to help personal gardens, their ecological benefits do not end at simply fertilizing backyards. Due to the barrels being able to decompose food (except meat) and most paper, compost barrels result in a significant amount of waste being decomposed instead of ending up in the garbage. This results in less waste for the garbage trucks to haul to the dumps, resulting in less fuel being used in the process. It also results in less space being used for degradable materials in dumps and landfills making our use of them exclusively for non-decomposable materials. If used on a large scale, these barrels can help result in fewer landfills being dug. Although this plan is idealistic, so has every major plan in human history. Every plan, ideology, and theory all revolve around idealism, Martin Luther King and Gandhi being prime examples. As I earlier said, the private citizen needs to comprehend that it is

not likely for them to single-handedly tackle the ecological problems facing the world today. Yet at the same time, citizens must also realize that just because they cannot single-handedly halt ecological problems, it does not give them an excuse to become a part of the problem. Although compost barrels will not make a noticeable difference immediately or possibly ever, it does not mean that that difference is not there.