

Composting: Planting the seeds of environmental awareness

By JOHN FARLEY

BORACAY, The Philippines — The recycling and compost program at Fairways and Bluewater Boracay here is in full swing, as are the club's community outreach and education program.

This was made evident recently when elementary school students from Little Acorn

Montessori were invited to the golf course for a field trip. The students learned how recycling and composting can greatly reduce the waste generated by people. By teaching young minds the importance of resource conservation we are perpetuating a positive trend — one that can only benefit future generations.

Forty-two students from 7 to 14 gathered at the Fil-Estate Eco Centre, located near the 17th fairway and the maintenance building. I explained what solid-waste management is and how Fil Estate is dealing with the waste created at the course. They learned about all the different categories of waste, like paper, plastic

bottles, glass bottles, aluminium cans and batteries, all of which can be separated and recycled.

To learn how to recycle, we had them sort through a large pile of materials.

They pulled out all the recyclables and put them into the appropriate containers. When they were finished, only a

small pile remained. Everyone was amazed at how recycling reduced the amount of waste that we started with. They also enjoyed the "hands-on" aspect of the demonstration. I explained that all the trash from the entire facility comes to the Eco Centre for processing. All recyclables are dealt with accordingly and all paper is shredded and composted.



The students then got their first lesson in composting. I explained that composting is the same as recycling except that, with composting, the entire process takes place on site.

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Again, the students were treated to hands-on training. I had previously set out several piles of compostable materials like clippings, leaves, paper, chopped banana plants and some kitchen scraps. Everybody used shovels and sacks to transfer the material to the compost bins. Then they mixed up the whole lot and added some mineral soil. I explained that the soil contains the microbes needed to break down the compost and convert it into humus.

After mixing everything together, we added some water because the process of decomposition also requires moisture. We then covered the pile with plastic and continued our talk.

I told them that the pile needs to be turned, or aerated every week or so. This helps speed up the process by providing plenty of oxygen to the microbes. After 10 weeks, the pile will only be one-fourth its original size. Once the center of the pile is cool to the touch, the process is complete. All that's left to do is sift the compost and you have a beautiful finished product.

We use the humus in potting mix at the native tree nursery and incorporate its use in the Eco garden. It's a great soil amendment and does wonders for both clay and sandy soils.

Humus improves the soil profile with better moisture and oxygen retention. Composting is environmentally sound and provides a useful finished product.



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