

Stop and Turn the Compost,

OK I'm a city kid at the core or at least I was. There are times when my roots pop up in the least expected places. I'll be waxing poetic (don't you love that phrase?) on the joys of a life bucolic and then those garbage flies that swarm the rotting pears in our compost bucket will get me all bent out of shape. I start swatting aimlessly at a creature, or a thousand creatures, who weigh less than nothing in a vain attempt at ridding our kitchen of the little buggers. The only effect I have is to stir them up, like a smoothie, whipping them into the air only to have them land later in precisely the same places from whence they arose. What do they do exactly? Why are they here?

Veronica is the queen of all things friendly to the earth. We recycle everything that is recyclable and we keep trying to recycle things that aren't. We compost plant and vegetable matter and what remains as trash fills only a tiny bag every week to be taken to the drop-off. I am completely and utterly in favor of such behavior. It is the right thing to do. There is however the occasional down side. I opened the fridge the other day to find a huge portion of it given over to stuff that hadn't made it to the compost pile yet, browning lettuce and herbs giving off their soupy sluice, several eggplants that were collapsing from the inside out and a bunch of cukes that could best be described as 'paste'.

I am a clean refrigerator guy. I like to see where things are, right away. I am doubly afflicted with the standard male ailment known as "Honey, where's the....." I do not like picking through a wall of greenish leafeteria to find the mustard. I am not a fan of leftovers but I am trying, I really am. My adjustment is made infinitely more difficult if I have to climb through decomposing greenery on my way to what was interesting last night. The next new taste is what attracts me. What we ate yesterday is so...yesterday. But I am learning. Stew really is better the next day. Soups, generally improve with age. I guess it's the uncooked fresh things that lose me. Why can't everything be like Braunschweiger? Always good and always as fresh as it ever was.

I think we may be the only couple to wash more plastic bags than Ziploc makes. Is that possible? I have found plastic bags full of plastic bags in so many places around our domain. They are all waiting to be taken to a vast holding pen from whence they shall be delivered to a remaker of things plastic to begin their progress all over again.

We have bags full of bags in the car, in the basement, in the cupboard and in the closets. Veronica treats old bags the way other folks treat their dainties, hand washed and line dried. I looked out the other morning on a gorgeous sunrise all dappled and promising only to have my gaze interrupted by our clotheslines full of fluttering poly bags, like jellyfish under clothespins.

Have you noticed that there are fewer and fewer things that our Houston County drop off sites will accept? You can't bring waxed cardboard, you can't bring shiny paper and who knows what's next? Soon they won't accept newspapers printed on Tuesdays and Saturdays or Canadian cans, forget about it. I'm beginning to suspect that Waste Management is regretting all the contracts they signed to recycle stuff and is merely regressing to their basic business model of "In your home yesterday, in their landfill tomorrow."

All of this grouching is fine and dandy and it makes me feel good to get a few things off my chest. But the truth remains that we discard so much more that we need to, that we are still in the mindset of disposable pens and diapers and razors and juice boxes and well, you know what I mean. It's not good for the planet when we use and pitch. Tons of this stuff washes up on the Atlantic Coast every day. It is far better that I should put up with a little inconvenience, a little aesthetic discomfort. The world would be much better off with a few million Veronicas riding herd on our excesses, with a few million more angels of aftermath.

I just have to remind myself that, on my way to a greener planet, I should stop and turn the compost.