Volunteers with the Lewis County Master Reclaver Composter (MRC) and Master Gardener (MG) programs know what it takes to build a dream garden. A hugelkultur (pronounced hoog-el-cull-tour—a German word for hill culture), is a raised garden bed in which you may grow most vegetables, fruits, or flowers with very little irrigation or fertilization. This technique is also a good way to use woody debris such as logs, branches, and twigs, which make up the foundation of a hugelkultur.

MRC volunteers recently built a hugelkultur in the compost demonstration site at the Central Transfer Station in Centralia; and visitors to the Southwest Washington Fair this year were able to see another hugelkultur built by volunteers near the fairground’s north gate. The MG demonstration garden in Fort Borst Park in Centralia is also the site of a hugelkultur.

Steps to build a hugelkultur are: 1) Dig a trench and set aside the soil and sod. 2) Lay logs or wood debris into the trench. 3) Push vegetative material into the cracks and gaps of the woody debris. 4) Top with manure, compost, straw, hay, or other organic materials. 5) Add more layers of woody debris with organic material until your mound is as high as you want. 6) Put sod on top of mound with the grass side down.

7) Cover with the soil saved when the trench was dug or use other good quality soil. 8) Plant a cover crop the first year or plant directly in the soil.

Decomposition of the organic material will warm the soil slightly during the first few years. The taller the hugelkultur, the less you’ll need to irrigate, as the rotting wood maintains moisture, allowing roots to absorb water and nutrients. When the hugelkultur bed is fully-developed, it can go for weeks without irrigation. Plants with deep roots requiring a lot of water, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkins, potatoes, squash, or root vegetables, grow well in a hugelkultur bed. For more information about hugelkulturs or the MRC/MG programs, contact the WSU Lewis County Extension office in the Lewis County Courthouse, 351 N.W. North St., Chehalis, 360-740-1212.
**New mercury light law starts Jan. 1**

A new Washington state law effective Jan. 1, 2013, establishes a statewide collection program for mercury-containing lights. The law creates a product stewardship program financed by mercury light producers.

When lights containing mercury, a metal that’s toxic to humans and the environment, are broken, mercury is released into the environment. The state legislature decided the law is needed because of the increased use of energy-efficient mercury lights. The law prohibits mercury-containing light producers from distributing and selling lights, bulbs, or tubes containing mercury for residential use unless producers are participating in the product stewardship program. Retailers that sell the lights will also become collectors of used fluorescent lights.

Mark Bronson, Lewis County’s Moderate Risk Waste Coordinator, says, “A free collection service to residential customers is currently offered at the Hazo Hut, and will continue to be offered once the law starts in January. However, we ask, and will continue to ask, that no more than 15 lights be dropped off per visit.”

Beginning Jan. 1, businesses and schools will be allowed to recycle fluorescent lights at the Hazo Hut free of charge, but must use the recycling program-approved boxes. Mark suggests obtaining these boxes as soon as possible. Businesses and schools are also limited to 15 lights per visit.

Bring mercury-containing lights to the Hazo Hut on these days and times: every Wednesday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; and the 1st and 3rd Saturdays, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Customers with more than 15 lights per visit, please call 360-740-1221 for assistance.

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**TV, Computer & CFL Recycling Has New Location at CTS**

Customers of the Central Transfer Station in Centralia will notice that the drop-off site for televisions, computers, and fluorescent lights has moved from the recycle area to the Hazo Hut area. Cathode ray and flat-screen televisions, computer monitors, lap tops, and CPUs may be dropped off for recycling at Lewis County transfer stations for the following fees: $8 per television, computer monitor, and lap top; and $2 per CPU. Projection televisions and miscellaneous electronics, such as printers, copiers, microwaves, DVD players, are disposed of with the garbage, not left at the Hazo Hut, and the garbage fee applies for these items.

Television, computer monitors, lap tops, and CPUs may be also be left free of charge at the following local collection sites for the Washington state electronics recycling program: the Goodwill Store, Harrison Ave., Centralia; the Centralia and Chehalis Visiting Nurses’ Thrift stores; and Tiger Mountain Technologies, Morton.

Residential customers may bring in up to 15 fluorescent lights free of charge, and until the state law for mercury-containing light collection takes effect Jan. 1, businesses must make an appointment to bring lights to the Hazo Hut. Please see mercury-light story at top of page for more details or call 360-740-1221.

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