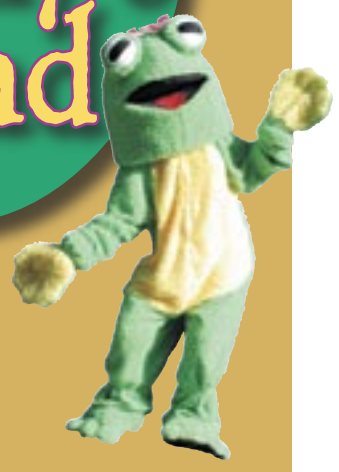

Meet Lily and learn more about Eugene's streets, parks, and water systems at our annual Public Works Day, Thursday, May 17 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 1820 Roosevelt Blvd. It's fun and free! For more information, call 682-4800.

Wiggling Workers Convert Kitchen Scraps into Plant Food

Most of us only think of worms when we are digging in our gardens or getting ready to go fishing. What you might not know is that worms are actually hard workers when it comes to helping out around the house. They are master composters, and they will eat kitchen scraps so you'll have less trash to carry out to the curb. The rich compost they create will be great for your garden, too!

It is easy to build a simple bin where worms can go to work recycling kitchen waste. Supplies you will need are:

❍ A covered box: A 12 to 18-inch deep wood or plastic box, about 16 x 24 inches wide and long, with drainage holes in the bottom. This could be anything from an old drawer to a fancy plastic storage tote. Worms like dark places, so no clear plastic please, and the cover should block light on the top. You may want to place a tray under the bin to collect any water or worms that come out through the drainage holes.

❍ Bedding: A mixture of shredded newspaper, cardboard, brown leaves, dry grass clippings, sawdust or straw (some of each or just a few) with a couple handfuls of sand or soil mixed in.

❍ Food: Kitchen scraps including fruit and vegetable scraps, tea bags, used coffee grinds and filters, and egg shells. Avoid meat, dairy products, greasy foods and pet waste as these things will make the bin smell bad.

❍ Air: Keep the bedding loose so the worms can breathe.

❍ Water: Worms need to be moist but remember—they cannot swim!

❍ Worms: Red worms are best for making compost, and can often be found in aged manure or compost heaps or at fishing tackle shops. Other earthworms (the ones you dig up in soil) will not work in this type of bin.

Red worms (also known as red wigglers or compost worms) are usually 1½ to 4 inches long and can live 4 to 5 years. Their bodies are dark reddish-brown with light yellow stripes between each segment. Each worm can produce a cocoon with two to 20 eggs inside every seven to10 days. Baby worms take 60 to 90 days to reach adult size.

To assemble your worm bin

❍ Drill eight to 12 dime-sized holes in the bottom of your bin. You can line the bottom with screen to keep worms from escaping. Place the bin on bricks to allow water to drain.

❍ Fill your bin two-thirds full with your bedding mixture.

❍ Wet the bedding down until it feels like a wrung-out sponge. Fluff to create some air pockets.

❍ Add red worms and cover with a burlap sack, old carpet or other lid with holes that allow some air flow.

❍ Add food once or twice a week by burying it under a layer of bedding. Place the food in a different spot each time to keep the worms moving around the bin. If the bedding seems dry, sprinkle on enough water to keep the worms nice and moist.

Compost is decayed organic material, like the dark rotten leaves you find on the forest floor. Bacteria, mites, beetles, millipedes and sow bugs are other organisms that help to digest these materials in nature (and in your food bin!). Compost is full of nutrients that are healthy for all of your garden plants.

Worms don't like the cold, so keep your bin in a place where the temperature is between 45 and 80 degrees (a warm garage, protected porch, or indoors in the winter). In warmer months, keep the bin outside and away from direct sun or heavy rains.

In three to six months, the bedding and food waste will have completely disappeared, and the bin will be full of dark, fluffy compost. There also will be new worms, and worm egg cocoons which look like tiny lemons. Empty the bin onto a plastic sheet, collect the worms to use in your next bin, and spread the compost on vegetables and flowers in your garden.

For more information about worms, compost and recycling, visit the City's web site at www.eugenerecycles.org

SPLASH! Stormwater Pollution: Learn and Share

Teachers: For more information about *SPLASH! Stormwater Learn and Share*, and *Salmon and the Ecosystem*, call 682-8482.