

BIOCYCLE

ADVANCING COMPOSTING, ORGANICS RECYCLING & RENEWABLE ENERGY

2011 Conference Preview

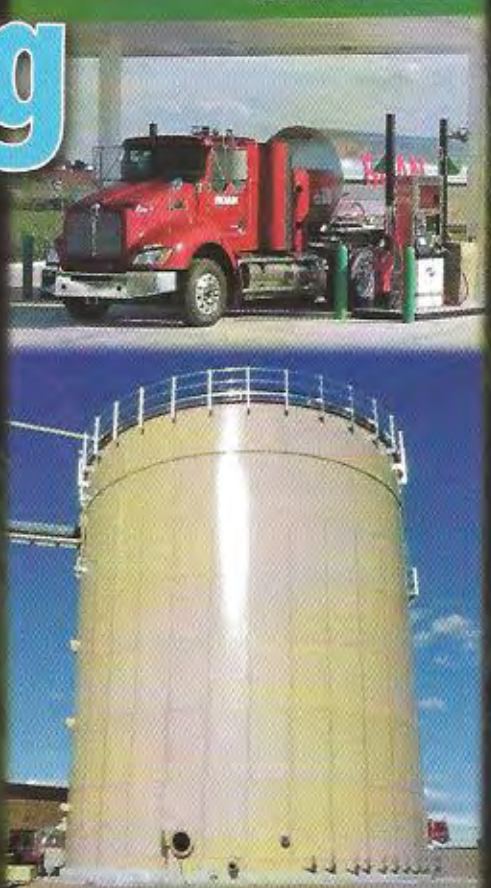
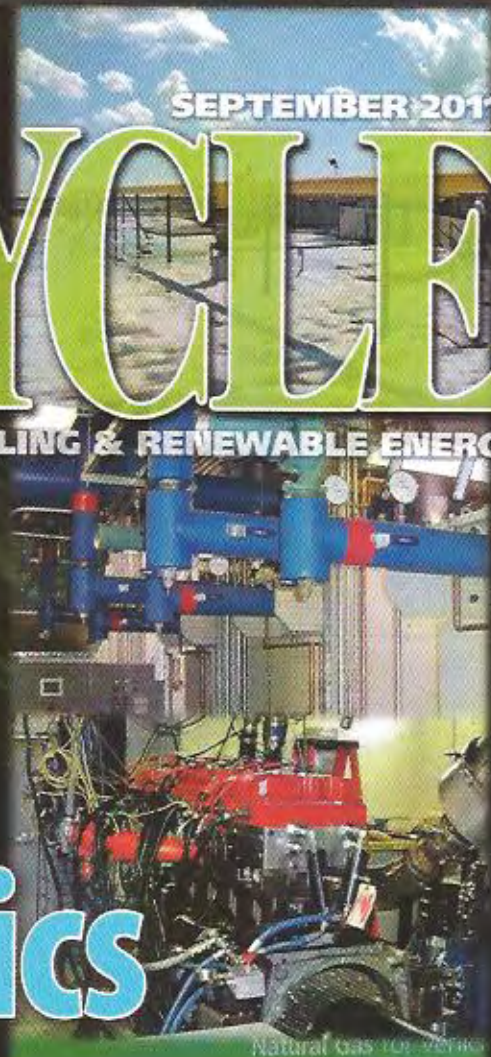
Renewable Energy from Organics Recycling

**Solving Odor Challenges
At Composting Facilities**

Filling Up On Dairy Biogas

**Smart Engines Open Markets
For Renewable Fuels**

**Connecting Kids
With Compost, Healthy Foods**



HANDS-ON LEARNING

CONNECTING KIDS WITH COMPOST, HEALTHY FOODS

Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center in San Diego County uses gardening, composting and cooking to educate school children and adults about a healthier lifestyle.

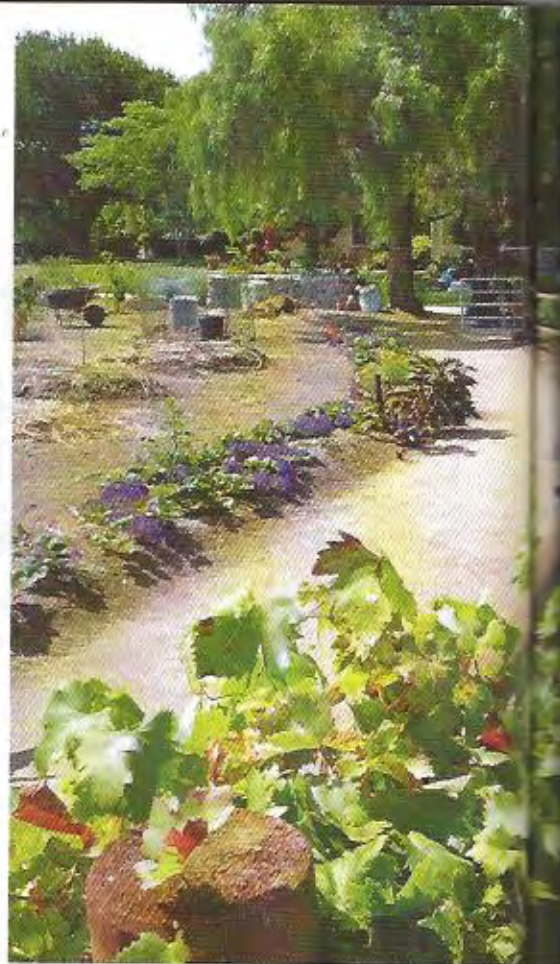
Rich Flammer

OLIVEWOOD Gardens and Learning Center in National City, California has made impressive strides towards fulfilling its vision “to connect and motivate students and families from diverse backgrounds through organic gardening, environmental stewardship and nutrition education” and empower them “to be healthy and active citizens.” Fertile compost-amended soil in the gardens sprouts healthy fruits and vegetables that school kids and volunteers help to grow. Between student field trips, community visits, classes and tours, nearly 8,000 children, adolescents and adults have already visited Olivewood since it opened in February 2010.

National City is San Diego County's second oldest jurisdiction, located 15 miles from the Mexican border. Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center (OGLC) occupies a 6.85 acre property with a history that couldn't have been more fitting for the organization's purpose. The land and 4,000 square foot



Since opening in February 2010, nearly 8,000 children, adolescents and adults have visited Olivewood Gardens. School classes come four times a year to plant, work in the garden and cook with the harvest.



Princess Anne Victorian home had been owned by John and Christy Walton. John was the son of Walmart founder Sam Walton. When his father was dying of cancer, John flew around the world looking for a cure. The disease ultimately took his father's life. Years later, when Christy and John's only child Lukas was diagnosed with cancer, they found the cure in the form of a half-acre organic garden at their home in National City.

In 2006, the year after John Walton died in a plane crash, Christy Walton endowed the property to the International Community Foundation (ICF), a charitable organization that fosters cross-border philanthropy. She stipulated that the lower gardens she attributes to saving her son's life continue to be maintained for organic vegetable production and to promote healthy communities and diet. The ICF established a supporting organization that began as the ICF Center and was renamed Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center. The ICF then gifted the entire property to Olivewood.

Olivewood has developed an expanded, supercharged approach to health and nutrition designed to help thousands of children suffering from a wide range of diseases, especially obesity, diabetes, heart disease, various ailments associated with nutritional deficiency, or just overall marginal health due to



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poor diet. Educational programs, management and fundraising are led by Executive Director Amy Carstensen and Education Coordinator Michelle Cox.

Carstensen was a Program Officer and Director of Operations for the ICF before becoming director of OGLC. "We are so fortunate that the Walton's donated such a beautiful property that is now serving the community," she says. "Olivewood started as an idea to have a children's garden that has blossomed into a learning center for thousands." Cox has worked as a soils and restoration ecologist, and before joining Olivewood, ran an array of countywide environmental education programs. Both have extensive teaching experience and excellent bilingual educational skills.

GARDENING, COMPOSTING ... AND COOKING

Olivewood has three levels of gardening classes: 101, 201 and 301. Students are scheduled to come four times over the school year. "All of the schools in Na-

tional City require uniforms," says Cox. "So the kids are excited when they come here because they get to wear grub clothes!" The lesson plans are designed to encourage children and parents to "explore connections between plants, history, science, art, literature, math and nutrition, where learning is centered within the context of organic gardens and a demonstration kitchen," she adds. Olivewood's standards-based approach to science broadens the scope of nutrition education and is taught with a heavy emphasis on sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship. "Our program is entirely hands-on," notes Cox.

Composting is a key component of the gardens' fertility, but OGLC lacks sufficient feedstock to produce enough compost to meet its needs. Everything generated on site, including clippings, weeds, unusable fruits and vegetables from the gardens and fruit and vegetable scraps and soiled paper from Olivewood's kitchen are composted. Straw for bulking agent is imported, as are inputs required for biodynamic piles, which is one of the three composting systems that Olivewood employs. It also utilizes a standard thermophilic system of pitchfork aerated piles, and vermicomposting done in a 2- by 8-foot

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