

Repurpose your composting buckets

To the Editors,

If you're a Swarthmore resident who composts at home, please consider converting the 5-gallon bucket that recently appeared on your lawn into a mosquito-killing device. Just fill it with water, a handful of dried leaves, and 1/4 of a Mosquito Dunk (approximately \$10 for a packet of six), a donut-shaped cake packed with dehydrated *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti), a bacterium that kills only mosquito larvae and (attention indoor gardeners) fungus gnats. You then attach some netting or chicken wire to keep birds, chipmunks, and butterflies from getting trapped inside, and situate it near a shrub in a shady part of your yard.

Pregnant mosquitoes will seek out the container to deposit their eggs, and the resulting larvae will be killed by the bacteria.

Each Bti bucket has the po-

tential to kill thousands of larval mosquitoes during the summer, set them out in early March so that they are working during any unseasonably warm days when overwintering mosquitoes are active. The only maintenance required is to add a fresh chunk of Mosquito Dunk every three weeks to ensure that the larvicidal action is present (set yourself a reminder on your phone or note it on the calendar).

The effectiveness is greatest when all other sources of stagnant water are eliminated, so make sure to dump anything that collects water after every rain, and make sure your gutters are free of leaves that might create small pools.

Ideally, make a few extra buckets to gift to your neighbors. If more yards in the Borough deployed Bti buckets, we'd have fewer mosquitoes



Photo courtesy of Colin Purrington.

and, maybe, reduce the number of residents who get their yards fogged (for approximately \$100/month) with pyrethroids, treatments that likely reduce bird populations by constricting the supply of invertebrates they feed to their young.

Colin Purrington
Swarthmore