

EM Bokashi Network-USA: EM Environmental Education and Food Waste Recycling Program

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Abstract : *The EM Bokashi Network is a worldwide grassroots movement aimed at promoting community recycling of food waste and gardening through the use of EM (Effective Microorganisms). Inspired by Dr. Teruo Higa, discoverer of EM, this network has its roots in Japan, where over one million people are involved. The network's primary mission is to reduce the amount of waste going into landfills and to encourage the recycling of organic waste. The network promotes the use of EM Bokashi as a tool to transform food waste into a nutrient rich compost that can be used for gardening and landscaping. The program is unique in that it provides all individuals, regardless of their age or ability, a chance to contribute to their communities and to become environmental advocates. In 1996, the Tucson-based company EM Technologies, Inc. launched the EM Bokashi Network-USA to introduce EM Bokashi food waste recycling to schools and communities in the United States. Pilot projects at Miles Exploratory Learning Center and the Arizona State Schools for the deaf and the Blind (ASDB) in Tucson have led these schools to be recognized as national models for their innovative composting and gardening projects. The Miles ELC received the 1996 NEAT REAP environmental award for diverting 5 tons of food waste from county landfills. In 2000, the Centre won top prize for Outstanding School Garden at the 3rd Annual Southwest Region School and Community Gardening Conference.*

In addition to its extensive EM gardening projects, ASDB is the first school in America to implement an EM vocational program, in which students produce their own Bokashi and high-quality EM-composted soil for their school and the community. In April of 2001, ASDB and EMBN-USA received permission to utilize a three acre site on the ASDB campus to establish an EM model community farm where the community can participate in an EM Bokashi food waste recycling system. In 1998 the EMBN-USA received a major grant from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality to recruit new schools and organizations. As one of the projects funded by the grant we developed an EM Teachers Manual and professionally produced Bokashi Network educational video. For the first time, schools and organizations throughout the English-speaking world will be able to easily learn and promote the use of this unique EM Bokashi indoor fermented composting system. The potential is tremendous, and will help fulfill one of our major goals, which is the establishment of EM Bokashi Network chapters in all fifty states in the U.S. Following the success of the above programs, over forty schools and organizations in Arizona have implemented EM Bokashi food waste recycling and gardening programs. To date the EMBN-USA has shared its program with more than 60 schools in North America, and schools in Missouri, Washington, Massachusetts, New Mexico and California have recognized the educational value of this program and become active participants in the EM Bokashi Network-USA.
