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Worms to Save the Soil

Lush forests, pristine waters, and sandy beaches are all things that define Michigan's beauty. Unfortunately, these beautiful sceneries are in danger with environmental issues that people have caused. People need to do better in protecting the environment to preserve its beauty for future generations. While, to some, it seems that their individual actions will not change the course of the global climate, a collective of individual actions has significant influence. One of the things that are threatening the existence of the planet is landfills. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, landfills are the third-largest source of human-related methane emissions in the United States (Basic Information about Landfill Gas). The United Nations expands that methane is the primary contributor to the formation of ground-level ozone, a hazardous air pollutant, and greenhouse gas, exposure to which causes 1 million premature deaths every year (Methane Emissions Are Driving Climate Change). Fortunately, people have the opportunity to reduce the amount of methane in the air. Limited materials and pure determination are all that people need to make their communities and planet better. Composting, specifically through the use of worms, is an effective way that people can help their planet while simultaneously improving their own gardens.

Worms are one of the most important organisms in the health of the environment. Their underground lifestyle plays a crucial role in keeping soil healthy to facilitate the growth of plants. According to the Soil Association, these "soil engineers" do three important jobs for our planet. Worms recycle nutrients within the soil which helps naturally fertilize the earth, oxygenate the soil

as they burrow channels through, and help clean up contaminated land by enhancing the number of microorganisms in the soil (Why Are Worms Important?). Without worms, the soil would not be able to facilitate the growth of plants. The absence of plants would ruin the food chain and ecosystems would collapse. It is evident that the health of the environment is heavily reliant on worms to promote growth. Another major benefit to worms is that they produce waste that can be used as a fertilizer for gardens. According to Hornsby, the waste that worms produce is packed with micro and macronutrients, a perfect general fertilizer for plants. Instead of using harsh fertilizers on plants that can have serious effects on ecosystems, "worm tea" is natural and safe to put on plants (Worm Farming Fact Sheet). With the help of worms, the health of ecosystems and gardens are simultaneously revitalized.

Worm composts are easily built and maintained while providing generous benefits to gardens and the environment. As a kid, my mom and I created a worm farm. We bought a worm container, gathered soil, and ordered worms. I remember being curious about how we were able to add food scraps into the container and the next day the worms had eaten them. Whenever we had visitors, I wanted to introduce them to my worm friends. The worm farm was efficient enough that we were able to add most of our food scraps to the container instead of contributing to the landfills. If the majority of the population converted to the use of worm farms or simply composting, the amount of food that would naturally decompose into the soil would have a large impact on the environment. In the spring, my mom would be able to take the "worm tea" that worms produced and pour it on the plants in our garden to aid in their growth. Overall, not only was the worm farm exciting to see as a child, it acted as good fertilizer and reduced the number of food scraps left in landfills.

While worm tea and worm farms will not end climate change and global warming, it is a step in the right direction. People are not going to independently solve the problems of the world. Large issues like these require determination and help from many people. Whether the contribution is big or small, more people need to get involved in protecting the planet. As famous writer, Eduardo Galeano says, "Many small people, in small places, doing small things can change the world." (Galeano). The time to act is now before it is too late.