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# Purifying the Buddha land

## Organic waste as a practice ...

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The little green plastic bucket is right there in the kitchen area of the dojo, next to exit to the tiny lightwell. It has been there ever since the North London Group moved into the basement at the Caledonian Road in 2012.

At the time, there was not much organic waste collection in London. We used to have a much bigger container in the lightwell, into which we emptied the tea bags and flower cuttings from the little “green bucket”. Once every couple of weeks, one of us had to carry this big, heavy (and by then also quite smelly) container in neighboring Camden where there already was an organic waste collection.

Things are much easier now, as Islington Council maintains a number of big brown food waste bins in the area. And since a year or two, we get the handy green biodegradable refuse bags for free and it allows a clean and quick handling of the scraps.

North London is very densely populated. Not many people here can afford to have a garden, let alone a home composting setup. We have to rely on communal schemes of food waste collection. Having spent a year at La Gendronnière in the vegetable gardens, I have learned a thing or two about composting. Where others see mouldy sandwiches and dirty peelings, I see thousands of little creatures producing rich and earthy smelling humus. I see a soil full of life and delicious vegetables growing. Not many fellow Londoners have the benefit of this experience ...

So, it is very encouraging to see more and more people filling up the brown bins. But there is still a lot to do: too much food still goes to waste in the first place. A lot of organic scraps still end up in landfill, producing the climate-change gas methane, and you still see a lot of plastic bags in the brown bins, although the biodegradable alternatives are readily available.

In the dojo, food waste collection is still far from effortless. The nearest brown bin is ten minutes away and somebody has to remember to collect the filled biodegradable bag before it starts to degrade in the dojo. We don't produce that much organic waste: a few flower stalks, coffee grains, tea bags and the odd banana peel. Thus, how easy it would be to dump these into the general waste just outside and save ten valuable minutes of your busy city-life day!!

As answer, I found inspiration in a passage of the Vimalakirti Sutra where the famous lay practitioner explains how a Bodhisattva should master the Buddha way: “Although he [the Bodhisattva] knows the Buddha lands along with living beings are empty, yet constantly he works to purify the lands.” (The Vimalakirti Sutra, translated by Burton Watson - chapter 8.)