

# Miss Katie's Kids Korner

## Compost Family Vacation

by Katie Taylor

Gardening is magical; you plant tiny green tomato stalks, mix up a little fertilizer and water, then watch them grow into luscious red globes. This year I decided to use homemade compost instead of commercial fertilizer. The same day I planted, I put that morning's coffee grounds and eggshells into a plastic bag in order to make compost. It wasn't until later I discovered that making compost is a long and timely process. In other words, yesterday's coffee grounds would not be tomorrow's compost. Oh.

Families tend to approach their long-awaited summer vacations in much the same way I thought I could make compost. I don't mean to compare your family to potato peels, but, like compost, the family vacation combines diverse entities into one small cabin by a lake expecting this proximity to bring about a closeness not found the rest of the year. It doesn't matter if you are taking a cruise or going camping in the wilderness – this transformation of elements into a congenial fertile whole does not happen overnight. If you haven't started the process already, here are a few glitches you might encounter.

### BUT I HAVE TO TALK TO MY FRIENDS!

Be prepared for 'tween computer/cell phone withdrawal. You are taking someone who spends most of her waking hours talking to or IM-ing her friends and you now expect her to go for a WHOLE WEEK without contact? That's like asking her not to breathe! Well, you say, she can talk to us, her family. Yeah, she could, but she doesn't want to talk to you, she wants to talk ABOUT YOU to her friends.

Test your skills. Following are 3 possible solutions:

- Take her to a local library with Internet access
- Buy a calling card
- Make a video and mail to friends

Your best choice is "b," buy a calling card. Having her own calling card will give her the freedom to talk to her friends. But be sure to put a limit on the card, no extra minutes, once the allotted time is up for the week, no more. If you chose "a," you are in danger of setting a precedent. Every time you go to town, she is going to want to go to the library and eventually will want to go to the library even when

you aren't going to town. And "c" is not immediate enough. You'll be home before the video; "c" is only an option if she is at sleep-away camp for the summer.

(Note: Computer/Cell phone withdrawal may also be manifested by you or your husband or any other member of the family who feels the need to do business while on vacation. Anything over an hour can be considered dependency behavior and a total deprivation approach may be necessary).

### SPECIAL DIETS

When I was growing up, car trips meant turkey sandwiches on white bread with lots of mayo. That was the choice... take it or leave it. Now it seems that everyone is on some sort of special diet. If you are vacationing with relatives you haven't seen for awhile, be prepared for some odd food requests: your sister's new husband has a life-threatening allergic reaction to all kinds of seafood; your step-brother is now a total vegan and no longer will eat eggs or dairy; your father-in-law had a heart attack last year so is on a salt-free diet and your mother was diagnosed with diabetes so needs to stay away from sugar.

Test your skills.

- Have everyone bring his or her own food
- Be sure to have lots of fresh fruits and vegetables on hand
- Make salad a main course
- All the above

The correct answer is "d." All of the above. Those on special diets should be prepared with special foods. Meals (with or without meat) that provide plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and salads with dressing on the side will satisfy most restricted diets.

### SHARED BATHROOM

Summer cabins are usually equipped with one bathroom. When you put three generations together, it can be a very busy place. Here are a couple of suggestions:

- Each family member is responsible for keeping track (and drying) his/her own towel. If it's wet, put it on the line; if dry, fold it neatly and take it back to your room.
- All personal items – razors, toothbrushes, shampoo, special creams, teeth – must be kept in your room. Plastic buckets from the dollar store work well for this.
- When you use the bathtub, wipe out the tub for the next person.
- During prime time (in the morning,

before bed) limit bathroom time to 5 minutes.

- Get a lock for the door.
- Buy air freshener.

### POINTS FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR

Benjamin Franklin was right when he put a three-day limit on guests and fish. Your family unity starts to unravel about that time as well. Everyone gets a little itchy to go back to old behavior patterns.

Test your skills: To encourage the "Kodak moment" of this year's summer vacation you could:

- Organize a family picnic
- Take them to the beach
- Go shopping at an outlet
- Give in and let them do what they want.

The correct answer is "d." Give in and let them do what they want. Being together all day, every day is way over-rated and shouldn't be forced. Any good gardener will tell you not to tug on the new shoots to hasten the crop. The fact that the whole Compost family is in geographical proximity to one another is all you really need: the rest will take care of itself. 🌱

Katie Taylor teaches *Kindermusik* in Ellenville, Monticello and Liberty. Summer classes start July 12. For more information call 647-7291 or email [ktyville@ulster.net](mailto:ktyville@ulster.net).

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