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## Waste management model for colonies

The project is the first of its kind for a big apartment complex in the city

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**CHENNAI** Residents of Aashiana, a 174-apartment complex in Alwarpet, have started a waste management project that could serve as a model for other large residential colonies.

The project is the first of its kind for a big apartment complex in the city. Kitchen waste is segregated from household garbage and composted in pits. The compost, rich in nutrients, is used as manure in the garden.

Ram Ramanathan, a resident and member of the Aashiana Environment Club, said the key factor in a source segregation project was people's participation. "We went to each flat and urged people to dispose of their kitchen waste in a separate bin," he said.

### Recycling waste

The apartments are divided into 11 blocks. Each block has a person employed to collect the sorted garbage and empty it into a cement tank for composting. In order to ensure compliance, volunteers sometimes go on rounds to check if kitchen waste is being disposed of separately.

"We also plan to ask kids to help in the compliance checking. They are enthusiastic about the project," Mr. Ramanathan said.

Posters are displayed at various locations to define compostable kitchen waste: vegetable/ fruit peel, cooked rice/wheat, egg shells, flowers and coconut shells. Recyclable waste such as plastic, paper, metal and glass is sold for



**COLLECTIVE EFFORT:** Kitchen waste is composted at Aashiana Apartments in Alwarpet on Friday. — PHOTO: K.V. SRINIVASAN

scrap value. People interested in learning about waste management can visit the complex. Hari Sethuraman, a member of the management team of the residents' association, said each of the 11 blocks produced between eight and 10 kg of kitchen waste per day. "Individuals have to learn the discipline of segregating the waste. Educating them will be a continuous process as new people move into apartments in the complex," he said.

### More examples

S. Indrakumar of voluntary organisation Exnora Interna-

tional has lent his expertise for the composting project at Aashiana. He said that a few institutions in the city were doing good work in source segregation and composting. St. Dominic's School in St. Thomas Mount and a school run by Anderson Church in Egmore compost green waste.

Some residents of Indira Colony in Ashok Nagar have been composting garden waste in the neighbourhood Corporation park.

T.R. Ramaswamy, a resident, said the leaves shed in the park were swept up and

composted. A kg of the compost fetched Rs. 5. At its present capacity, the composting vats in the park could produce about 150 kilos in three months.

Sultan Ahmed Ismail, an expert in vermicomposting, said it was time to make it mandatory for institutions and large apartments to segregate waste and compost green waste at source. "Institutions and large apartment complexes have the space for composting. Source segregation can be made compulsory just like rainwater harvesting," he said.