



## William Laurens Rathje's 10 year-old, landfill carrots

W. Rathje is an American archaeologist with a PhD in anthropology from Harvard University. He was the longtime director of the Garbage Project which studied trends in discards by field research in Tucson, AZ, and in landfills elsewhere.

Rathje's research uncovered some misconceptions about landfills. In particular, it was revealed that *the rate of natural biodegradation is far slower than had been assumed.*

In natural systems, anything organic, or derived from something that was alive, is capable of decomposing. Something as natural as a carrot cannot decompose at a normal rate in a landfill because it is buried by trash. Oxygen, water, sunlight, and organisms are all limited in a landfill. If composted, the carrot will rot and turn into healthy soil between 3 months to a year!