

Expired beer reused for composting, bottles recycled to reduce waste

By Iffath Fathima / Updated: Jul 4, 2026, 06:00 IST



What could have ended up as waste was instead transformed into a resource at Swachagraha Kalika Kendra in HSR Layout, where volunteers recently used 10 crates of expired beer for composting and gardening, while ensuring the glass bottles were sent for recycling.

The initiative began after environmentalist Odette Katrak was informed by an event organiser that several crates of beer, which had expired around seven months earlier, were lying unused after an event. Instead of discarding the contents, she contacted the team at Swachagraha Kalika Kendra to explore a sustainable alternative.

The expired beer was diluted at a ratio of one litre of beer to 20 litres of water before volunteers applied it to compost piles at the centre. They also poured the diluted solution around plant roots instead of allowing the material to enter the waste stream.

Dr Shanthi Tumalla of Swachagraha Kalika Kendra said, “We don’t want to throw any resource in the drain unnecessarily. Alcohol has yeast and sugar; it acts as food for microbes. The decomposition process will be activated. Diluting and putting it for plants helps soil microbes as well. They release micronutrients like potassium and phosphorus. The dilution of 1:20 should be put on the roots. One litre of beer and 20 litres of water. We used it on our compost in Kalika Kendra.”

The centre said the compost heaps benefited from the additional microbial activity encouraged by the yeast and sugars in the beer.

Katrak said the initiative also highlighted waste management and public awareness. “Most people, when things expire, will put them outside the door for housekeeping staff and vendors to pick up. In this case, it was seven-month-old expired beer after an event. One of the organisers reached out to me and said they had it,” she said.

She added, “We want to change our way of thinking. People should know what happens to the waste after it goes out of the door. We could have just poured the alcohol into the sink and sent the bottles for recycling. Then we thought, why throw the beer when it can have benefits? Beer has yeast and can be good for composting. The bottles can be reused and recycled. The lesson is to think about what happens to the waste instead of leaving it at the door and assuming it is someone else’s responsibility.” The bottles were later handed over to a dry waste collection centre and material recovery facility for recycling.