

THE LATEST DIRT

Spring
2008

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER VICTORIA COMPOST EDUCATION CENTRE

Moss - It's Growing on Us!

By Marion Wylie

Mosses are often regarded as pests as they tend to replace grasses and take over lawns. However, mosses are actually beneficial having both ecological and aesthetic value. Ecologically, mosses act to control erosion and help retain moisture and nutrients in the soil. They are also a good bio-indicator of air and water pollution. They only thrive in areas that exhibit good air and water quality. Mosses are also one of the first plants to respond to acid rain; the decline in mosses (and other related plants, such as lichens) indicate a negative change in the environment.

Aesthetically, mosses add a natural beauty to the lawn and garden setting, typically filling in void spaces of soil where little else will grow. Mosses can brighten up a shady corner of your property as they are at their greenest in low light, unlike most grasses which need full sun to thrive. Moss may be the ideal plant under large, shady trees – providing low-maintenance year-round greenery. Mosses do well with most shade-loving shrubs and deciduous trees but may not hold up as well under conifers.

Growing or Controlling Moss...

Understanding what mosses need to grow is important for both promoting and controlling its growth. First of all, mosses do not compete with lawn grasses, they only occur when some underlying condition inhibits the growth of grasses and other plants. These conditions typically arise as a result of:

- ◆ Medium to dense shade.
- ◆ Poorly drained, persistently wet soils.
- ◆ Acidic soil conditions.
- ◆ Repeated “scalping” of turf on uneven terrain.
- ◆ Compacted soils.



Ryon Ji Moss Garden in Japan

Controlling Moss Growth

There are several steps you can take to prevent moss growth. The easiest is to simply prune surrounding trees and shrubs that shade your flowerbed and lawn. If the moss is not controlled using this technique it's likely a result of soil conditions. If you're unsure of your soil conditions you could get a soil test to evaluate your soil quality. Adjust your soil's fertility and pH based on the test's recommendations. If your flowerbed contains acid-loving plants such as rhododendrons and azaleas, you may not want to add lime to your soil

If you have compacted, poorly drained soil, dig in 1 to 2 inches of compost to improve the soil's fertility and ability to regulate moisture. You could also cover bare soil with 2 to 3 inches of bark chips to control moss where the moss grows.

But perhaps the best solution is to beat nature at her own game and, after amending the bare spots with compost, fill them in with groundcovers that complement your flowerbed design. Low-growing plants that perform well in shade include Miner's Lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*), Wood Strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*) and Bunchberry (*Cornus Canadensis*).

Why work against Mother Nature?

Chances are if the conditions are right for moss to grow, significant renovation may be required to get grass to thrive in the same area, with no guarantees... So instead of fighting it, you might want to consider helping the moss flourish.



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Newsletter Formatting

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New Staff Members!

The Centre welcomes Tomiko to the team!

Hello Fellow Compost Enthusiasts,

In February, I was very thrilled to start my new job as the Education and Volunteer Coordinator at the Compost Education Centre. I am feeling very positive and engaged with this position. It is an excellent fit combining my background in Education, Environmental Studies and Sociology. Having taught and worked in diverse environments and roles such as environmental camp leader, gymnastic coach, special educational assistant, ESL teacher and garlic harvester I'm pleased to find such a warm and meaningful outlet for my passions.



Tomiko biting at the core of compost education.

If I am not elbow deep in worms or being chased by elementary school students, you can find me trying to unlock the secrets of baking bread, biking around our glorious island or reading some ambiguous social science book. However, if chasing my yellow bike up and down the island seems like a difficult way to make introductions, please drop by the Compost Education Centre and "say hi!" I am looking forward to meeting and working with you! -- Tomiko.

Introducing Marion Wylie - Camosun College Intern.



Originally from Ontario, Marion moved to Victoria after completing her Bachelors in Environmental Science and Biology at Trent University. After a couple of years of enjoying a break from her studies, Marion went back to school this fall and enrolled in the Environmental Technology program at Camosun College. Marion is really excited about working with the Black Gold Rush Program teaching children the value of composting and the influence it can have on climate change. Marion is interested in grassroots initiatives and promoting local awareness about global issues and prompting community involvement. Welcome Marion!

Learn about Neighbourhood Sustainability at the AGM!

This year's Annual General Meeting will be full of great information on Neighborhood Sustainability from our exciting guest speaker, Angela Evans from Local Solutions. You will also have a chance to hear about what's new in our ongoing programs, such as the Black Gold Rush. Join us to hear from our knowledgeable guest speaker, for a chance to win fantastic door prizes, and for the usual great conversation and refreshments to tantalize the mind and the palate.

The AGM will take place on site at the Compost Education Centre on Sunday, April 13 from 1-3pm.

If you have been a Compost Club member for a month or longer, you are eligible to vote for the Board of Directors and other motions. If you would like to nominate someone for the Board, please contact Nadine at 386-9676. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor.



Black Gold Rush Hoe Down!

It will soon be time to take off those gardening gloves, and set your hoe down for a celebration of composting in our community. The Black Gold Rush "Hoe Down" will take place at the Compost Education Centre's Organic Plant Sale in May, to celebrate the success of the Black Gold Rush Challenge. We would like to invite individuals, classrooms, schools, community groups and businesses to share compost success stories for us to feature on our Community Compost Wall of Fame at the Hoe Down. If you want to share your success and help inspire others to start composting, please contact Analisa at blackgold@compost.bc.ca. Happy Composting!

FRIDAY WORK PARTIES AT THE CENTRE! CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS!

Spring is here in full force and the staff at the Compost Education Centre are very excited for the diverse, dynamic events and wonderful site Projects scheduled this year. Angela, the Site Coordinator and Compost Educator, would like to invite all volunteers, students, compost enthusiasts and anyone interested in learning about growing food and making compost to attend Friday afternoon work parties!

The work parties take place every Friday between 1pm and 4pm. Sign up through email or phone is encouraged. There are a variety of fun and educational tasks that we will be working on including:

- Building and sifting compost
- Seeding for our upcoming Organic Plant Sale
- Seeding and transplanting in our Veggie Garden
- Weeding our different and multi-functions demonstration gardens
- Worm harvesting and worm bin construction
- Setting up new irrigation systems
- Making Compost/Willow Tea
- General Site maintenance
- Mulching

All of these tasks and duties will provide volunteers with a deeper understanding of the observation skills necessary in managing an ever growing and dynamic demonstration site. Hope to see you at our "living classroom" on Fridays between 1pm and 4pm!

CALL OUT FOR WORM STEWARDS!

Red wigglers are our hardest working volunteers but they need your care and attention! Duties would include:

- Occasional worm harvesting and feedings
- Making worm bin bedding and container and stand construction
- Monitoring our worm breeding program

We ask worm stewards commit to 3 hrs/week for a minimum of one to three months. Please contact Angela: sitemgr@compost.bc.ca



Black Gold Rush Update

How does your compost measure up?

The Black Gold Rush Challenge is entering its final quarter and now is your chance to take part by logging on to the Black Gold Calculator and entering your compost tally (if you haven't already). All you need to do is estimate how much waste you've thrown into your compost bin in the past week, month or even year and use the calculator to find out your savings in green house gas emissions. For every kilogram of food waste we compost we are preventing an almost equal measure of green house gas emissions from entering out atmosphere. Imagine how that number can add up over time!

The Blackgold calculator can be found at
www.compost.bc.ca/blackgold



Giving Goes Green!

• Giving to the Compost Ed. Centre is easy! Save time and paper by offering your donations on-line through Canada Helps.org. Simply surf over to www.canadahelps.org and type in "Compost".

• Our name is on the top of the search results. Or, visit our website and click the Canada Helps link.

• And of course, donations are still happily accepted at our office.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

M. Jackson A. Twyman E. Hogan
P. McGuire A.J. McCallum A. Hertel

We gratefully acknowledge the core funding support that we receive from the CRD and the City of Victoria. Additional support is provided by the Fernwood Community Association and through the generosity of our Compost Club Members and the residents of Greater Victoria.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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Date	Topic	Time	Cost
April 5	Composting Basics	10am-12pm	FREE
April 5	Orchard Mason Bees	2-4pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)
April 26	Soil Bldg & No Dig Veggie Grdng	2-4pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)
May 3	Composting Basics	10am-12pm	FREE
May 3	Organic Weed & Pest Management	2-4pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)
May 31	Winter Veggie Gardening	2-4pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)
May 10	5th Annual Organic Plant Sale	10-1	FREE
June 7	Composting Basics	10am-12pm	FREE
June 7	Chickens in the City	2-4pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)
June 13-14	Compost Educator Volunteer Training Program		\$100 (\$85 deposit with \$15 payment)

For more details about these programs and our Full Events Schedule please see: WWW.COMPOST.BC.CA

MUST PRE-REGISTER FOR WORKSHOPS BY CALLING 386-WORM (9676) OR EMAILING info@compost.bc.ca

Organic Plant Sale !

Prepare yourself for our 5th annual Organic Plant Sale! We will have another large selection of plants including annual and perennial vegetables, ornamentals, and medicinal and herbal plants. Come early as the plants sell quickly!

When: Saturday, May 10th; 10 am – 1 pm

Where: Compost Ed Centre, 1216 North Park St.

Volunteer Spotlight!

The Compost Education Centre would like to recognize two of our outstanding volunteers: Tom and Marlene for their consistent help and the bright energy they bring to the centre.



Tom, our resident worm steward, aka “The Worm Lord”, comes in once a week to feed our red wigglers so we have plenty of healthy happy worms for our schools programs. And even though the job is often a challenging and smelly one, Tom shines in his commitment

to the Centre and the worms - he even came in during December when the centre was closed!

When Tom came to Victoria 6 months ago, he wanted to make connections with like minded-people. He found that volunteering with the compost centre offered a means to do that while giving back. Tom says that “I like composting; I think it’s really important and I like to support the work that goes on here”. From all of us at the Centre including the worms – Thank you Tom!



Marlene’s been a member of the Compost Ed. Centre for 12 years! As a long-term volunteer she’s done just about everything here. From outreach events like the Pumpkin Smash to worm harvesting Marlene truly embraces a philosophy of service and sustainability. “I do what I

can, I have my own bin and worm composter at home and am an avid recycler.” An avid worm composter, she’s taken verimcomposting to the next level with specialized food scrap processing methods and personally designed bins; she claims “I am not totally scientific about it. I like to experiment but I know I am getting quick and high quality worm casting.” Thank you Marlene for your ongoing support and inspiring activism!

Volunteer Appreciation Movie Night!!!

To celebrate National Volunteer Appreciation week, the Compost Education Centre is inviting you to partake in movie night. On Friday, May 2 come to the Centre to enjoy snacks, pizza, and an environmental film. Mingling starts at 6:30pm, the movie shows at 7:00! See you there!



THE LATEST DIRT is published quarterly. The deadline for submissions for the spring issue is March 15th, 2008. Submissions to the newsletter can be sent to the Compost Education Centre. Unless otherwise noted, articles appearing in this newsletter may be reprinted only in other not-for-profit publications, with the credit given to the author (when named) and **THE LATEST DIRT**.

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