

# THE LATEST DIRT

Winter  
2006

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER VICTORIA COMPOST EDUCATION CENTRE



## COMPOST FOR OUR CLIMATE: Join the Black Gold Rush!

*By Analisa Blake*

So often in the news lately there is talk of climate change, but what does it really mean for us in Victoria and is there anything that we can do about it? Did you know that composting is one way to reduce climate change? That may sound surprising, but read on and you will see how.

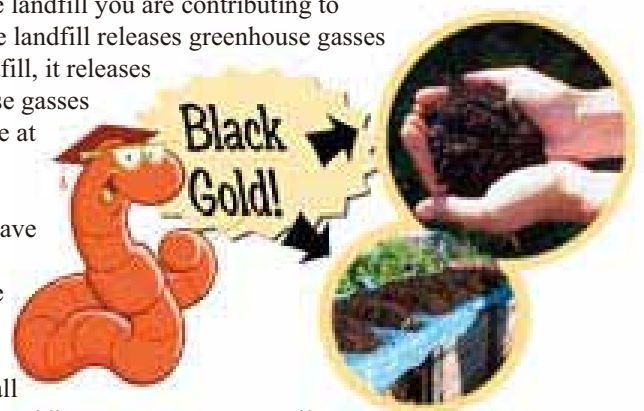
We now know that the lifestyles and choices of Canadians are having an impact on the Earth's climate. Many of our day-to-day activities, such as driving cars and purchasing food grown around the world pollute the air with green house gasses that stay in the earth's atmosphere and cause the climate to warm up. Here in Victoria we can expect climate change to result in longer, hotter, drier summers and wetter stormier winters. Hot dry summer weather could result in droughts, outbreaks of insects, and forest fires. Wetter winters could cause floods and landslides. All these problems may impact the health of our forest and fisheries resources, our ability to grow food, and the sustainability of our hydroelectric power stations.

If we don't make some changes soon, greenhouse gases will continue to accumulate in the atmosphere and the harmful consequences of climate change will increase. But the good news is we have a choice! Here at the Greater Victoria Compost Education Centre, we are promoting composting as a means of reducing our impact on the earth's climate.

So what are the connections between composting and climate change? If you stop to think about it, you'll find there are many!

For one thing, when you send your kitchen scraps and yard waste to the landfill you are contributing to climate change. This is because the truck that takes your garbage to the landfill releases greenhouse gasses as it burns fuel. And when your waste begins to decompose in the landfill, it releases methane gas into the atmosphere. Methane is one of the key green house gasses that cause climate change. By composting your kitchen and yard waste at home you can avoid the release of greenhouse gases.

And that's not all! When you use your homemade compost you don't have to make as many trips to the garden store for soil and fertilizer, so you reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from cars. Using your homemade compost also helps prevent the greenhouse gases that are emitted in the production, packaging and transportation of fertilizers and soils. And finally, when you add your compost to your garden, you are returning all the carbon that was in your food scraps and yard waste back to the soil. Adding compost to your soil provides the necessary nutrients for the growth of trees and plants, which in turn absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and release oxygen through photosynthesis.



*...Continued on page 3*

**Thanks to our project funders & supporters:**



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Environment Canada / EcoAction, Capital Regional District, City of Victoria, Victoria Car Share Coop, Camosun College, and City Green. Look for spotlights on our supporters in upcoming newsletters.



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**NEW LOGO**

*In the fall of 2006 we launched our new logo, with many thanks to the CRD for their invaluable design work. And so without further ado, allow us to introduce our new and improved Dr. Wiggles and the new look for communications from the Centre!*



**Winter hours at the Centre**

During the month of December, the demonstration site will be closed to visitors. We will re-open on Wednesday, January 10th. At that time, our hours will return to Wednesday to Saturday from 10-4. If you have a composting question during this time, please feel free to leave a message on the hotline: 386-WORM or email at [info@compost.bc.ca](mailto:info@compost.bc.ca). We look forward to seeing you in the New Year!



**Compost Club Discounts**

As a reminder, if you're looking for practical gifts for the holiday season, Compost Club members receive a 10% discount at the following garden centres and nurseries (some restrictions may apply): Big Barn Garden Centre, Borden Mercantile, Danica Nurseries, Dig This (all three locations), Garden Works (both locations), Little Elf Garden Centre, Meadow Oak Nursery, Garden Path Nursery.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS**

C. Brauning      J. Wiczorek      J. Hockin  
And the hundreds of people who made a donation at the Pumpkin Smash!

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.

## **COMPOST FOR OUR CLIMATE: Join the Black Gold Rush! (continued from page 1)**

Finished compost has so many nutrients in it that it is known as Black Gold! So, by composting we not only reduce the amount of harmful green house gases released into the atmosphere, but by nourishing trees and plants we also aid the process of removing carbon dioxide (one of the green house gases) from the atmosphere.

Stake a claim in your own backyard – Compost for our Climate and Join the Black Gold Rush!

Here at the Centre, we are challenging people to join the Black Gold Rush and measure the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that they reduce by composting. It's easy to do – just sign up and keep track of the amount you are composting using our interactive Black Gold Calculator. All participants will be entered into prize draws and awards will given out for creative composting by school and community groups.



## **How Can you Take the Black Gold Rush Challenge?**

If you have internet access you can join on the Black Gold Rush Website:

1. Go to [www.compost.bc.ca/blackgold](http://www.compost.bc.ca/blackgold) and create an online account.
2. Keep track of how much kitchen and yard waste you compost on a daily or weekly basis. We will send you a tally sheet that you can post on your fridge to do this.
3. Every month, log on to the website and enter the amount you have composted into the Black Gold Calculator (the calculator will tell you your greenhouse gas savings!).
4. Save your results and view an ongoing tally of your long term composting and greenhouse gas saving accomplishments!

If you don't have internet access you can send your compost tally to us and we can enter it into the black gold calculator for you and send you the results.

For more information on composting, or to Join the Black Gold Rush! Call 386-WORM or visit [www.compost.bc.ca/blackgold](http://www.compost.bc.ca/blackgold)

## **THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!**

Once again, we had a keen group of people take the Compost Educator Volunteer Training Program. Held from September 22nd to 24th, 11 new volunteers learned all about composting and organic gardening techniques, and about doing outreach and education with the Centre. These volunteers also came to us with extensive knowledge and experience already, and we look forward to "spreading the dirt" with them in the future. Welcome to the team!

In addition to our regular outreach programs, office assistance, worm stewards, and schools programs, we will be looking for volunteers to assist with our new Black Gold program in the new year. Let us know if you are interested in helping to promote composting as a means of addressing climate change.

Thank you so much to all our volunteers - without such a dedicated team the work of the Centre would not be possible. To show our thanks we held a Volunteer Appreciation Night at the Solstice Café on November 18th, where we had dinner and watched a documentary called The Future of Food. A few lucky volunteers went home with door prizes – congratulations!

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, our next volunteer training session will be held in March 2007.



## Another Smashing Success!

by Caitlyn Vernon



Each year at Halloween, out of an estimated 730,000 kgs of pumpkins purchased in the Greater Victoria region, approximately 40-60% of jack-o-lanterns end up in the Hartland landfill where they take up valuable landfill space. This is a frightening waste! And so once again this year, we encouraged people to “carve it then compost it!” By composting our jack-o-lanterns, we are able to keep organic waste out of the landfill.

Recognizing that not everyone has access to a backyard composter, we once again held our annual Pumpkin Smash community event and invited residents to bring their jack-o-lanterns to our giant Smash compost bins. And I am pleased to report that the 2006 Pumpkin Smash was an overwhelming success! More than 1500 residents brought their jack-o-lanterns to smash for compost at the Cloverdale Thrifty Foods on November 5th. Despite the rainy weather, a total of 4 large compost bins were filled, diverting 80 cubic yards of pumpkins from the landfill, beating last years total of 60 cubic yards (equivalent to 5 garbage truck loads).

Adults and children alike enjoyed smashing – not trashing – their jack-o-lanterns in the Tombstone Tipping and Jumpin’ Jack Smash games. Our very own Dr. Wiggles was on the scene all weekend, explaining the finer details of composting and interacting with kids. Participants learnt about the importance of keeping organic waste out of the Hartland landfill and techniques for composting, while the children were thrilled at the opportunity to smash their pumpkins!

We are pleased to announce that Morningstar Topham of Village 900 and Bryan Capistrano of JACK FM won the Smash Off competition and took home the prized Golden Wingdigger Award! Morningstar and Bryan had tough competition from teams comprised of Monday Magazine, Thrifty Foods and Dr. Wiggles in games such as Pumpkin on a Paddle, the Pumpkin Sack Race, the 3-Legged Pumpkin Race and the Batting Smash. Congratulations to all!

Thank you to our event sponsors for supporting such an important community event. Our thanks to Thrifty Foods, the Capital Regional District, A-Channel, Monday Magazine, Island Displays, and DLs Bins. Other’s who helped immensely were JACK FM, the Zone, Village 900, Shaw, Refuse, Michell Farms and the City of Victoria Public Works. And of course, a huge thank-you to our amazing team of volunteers who worked tirelessly through the weekend to make this event such a popular success.

Prior to the event, we had displays in all Thrifty Foods stores across the Capital region and a raffle to win one of 20 backyard compost bins donated by the Solid Waste Division of the CRD. More than 2900 residents entered the draw - congratulations to our winners!



### NEW STAFF AT THE CENTRE

In August, the Centre welcomed Karen Hawbolt to the team as our new Site Manager. Taking over from Chris, Karen brings a wealth of teaching and gardening experience to this position. After graduating from UVic with an Education degree, Karen spent 5 years teaching in schools across B.C. on topics such as environmental stewardship, waste management, globalization, and food security. Karen then left teaching to follow her passion to work the soil and grow food, and spent a year apprenticing in organic farming, seed saving, and permaculture. For the past 6 years she has been running an organic farming business and working with local farmers on Salt Spring Island and most recently in Saanich. She says she is excited to apply her knowledge and skills to the work of the Centre. Karen will be facilitating workshops, looking after the gardens and demonstration site, and managing the Centre’s worm breeding program. Welcome Karen!

**THE LATEST DIRT** is published quarterly. The deadline for submissions for the Spring issue is Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007. 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**.