

THE LATEST DIRT

Winter
2007

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER VICTORIA COMPOST EDUCATION CENTRE

Diggin' Deep

By Gregory Smythe

Are you, like us, concerned about global climate change? Do you want to help your soil to grow delicious-nutritious fruits and veggies? Do you want to participate in a movement that's creating a greener, more nourishing, more vibrant world?

The New Year is here and so is another great opportunity to support a more vibrant, nourishing and alive island! And we're excited at the Centre because the earth-compassionate act of composting and organic gardening offers us an awesome opportunity to look inside, "Dig Deep", go local and join community to move towards a more sustainable future. So, join us this year. Make plans, arrange dates and set intentions for all those wonderful composty moments you'll have in the coming spring. And start "Diggin' Deep" this season as you step into those New Year's resolutions.

What do I mean by, "Diggin' Deep"? I'm talking about physical digging –with a shovel, in the dirt, in our own backyards, gardens, community gardens, and worm bins. And "dig-in", as to look with-in because there is something metaphorical and personal about gardening. As we dig, we discover what's beneath the surface; we discover the content that makes up the soil the seeds we plant grow in; we discover the truth behind the parable, "As above, so below." And so, I'm talking about both digging in the dirt and diggin' down into our own selves. Diggin' helps us recognize how we are connected to the earth and soil around us. By digging down and inserting lost "goodness" we can remediate the beddings in which we grow. How about a practical example? Consider trench composting....

Trenching is the act of burying your organic "waste" directly into your garden soil. The advantage of this method over conventional composting is that it enables you to compost meat, grains, dairy, and cooked leftover foods that contain oil in addition to other kitchen scraps. Trenching is a great way of depositing nutrients into your soil at the exact place where plants need it – at their root zones. And all you need is a shovel! Easy and good for the earth!

Chris Coleman, city counselor and member of the CRD solid waste advisory committee, said it best last year. "Let's feed the land - not the landfill!" (CRD Media Release 2006). And he's right! According to the CRD, up to 30% of the "waste" going to the Hartland landfill are organic materials that could be composted at home or close by. Not only is trench composting a viable option, it's a crucial one in terms of soil remediation and the fact that the Hartland landfill is predicted to be full in less than 40 years! With Hartland receiving an estimated 45 million kilograms (99 million pounds) of organic "waste" a year, and with there no current plans to build a new landfill site; composting is the only viable option.

Perhaps you participated in our 3rd Annual Pumpkin Smash. Did you know that you helped us and Thrifty Foods to defer 21 thousand kilograms of pumpkins from the landfill?! Thanks to our local heroic sidekicks at Mitchell Brothers Farms, those pumpkins were tilled back into the earth to create beautiful farming soil You can rest assured knowing that your jack-o-lantern lay in peace, their remains nourishing the soil that will sprout life again to give us delicious locally grown food (and more pumpkins!). What a great way to keep our landfill lower and our soils richer! Thanks Mitchell Farms! And thank you Pumpkin Smashers! We count you all as happy heroic members of a growing and committed community of composters!

Community - the basis of social and environmental sustainability, and you are a member of it? And so we ask, are you diggin' deep, doing your part to make our little island more sustainable? What's going to make you more sustainable?

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and the month of December

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THE LATEST DIRT**

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Newsletter Formatting

Gregory Smythe

Centre Updates!

This year we had our first ever Holiday Composting Sale just to meet the growing composting demands - we literally couldn't keep composting equipment on our shelves following October's outstanding Pumpkin Smash. All this composting abundance has us venturing into creative and inspiring storage solutions. Following our December office renovations, we'll aim to transform our storefront while partnering with ReFuse (www.refuse.ca), a local organic recycling enterprise, to keep our inventory full so we can continue to offer you quality composting equipment at reasonable rates. Thanks for the great season everyone!!



**The Centre staff
renovating the office**

New Staff Members!

“NEW SONYA”...we mean the “New Maternity Leave Executive Director”!

The Centre is excited to welcome **Nadine Brodeur**, who will be filling in for Sonya Sundberg as Executive Director while she is on maternity leave. Nadine has been working in the nonprofit sector for over 6 years and has worked at many local



**Nadine pokes her head out
at the pumpkin smash.**

organizations such as HAT, Meals on Wheels, the Victoria Dragon Boat Festival, and the ICA FolkFest. Over the years Nadine discovered she had a passion for working with nonprofits and decided to study it further in her Masters at York University where she got a Masters in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Nonprofit Management and Community Involvement. Nadine brings a strong background in volunteer

management and is thrilled to take on this new challenge. If you haven't already, come and introduce yourself...she'll be the one staring absorbingly at the computer in the back office!

MICHAEL SILZER – Camosun College Intern

Growing up in Saskatchewan, Michael Silzer's first memory of beautiful British Columbia is a trip his family took to Expo 86. It was then that he fell in love with its landscape. Fourteen years later he found himself working as an organic gardener in Vancouver's concrete jungle prior to becoming a bicycle courier, where the smog and the heavy traffic drove him into a lifelong pursuit of urban tranquility. As a bicycle courier Michael practiced what he refers to as self motivation techniques through a Zen work ethic. He currently applies this work ethic to the Environmental Technology program at Camosun College, where his main focus is green building and urban sustainability. ...continued on page 3

Join the Board!

If you have 10 hours a month to devote to the direction of the Compost Education Centre, would like to be involved in a wonderful enterprise, and would like to learn about environmental non-profits as a part of our team, please call **Janet Hockin** at: **592-4457** or email **janet1542@shaw.ca**.

We're presently looking for knowledge/skills with respect to: executive compensation, accounting, grant writing/fundraising, budgeting, marketing, not-for-profit governance, risk management, influential networking and human resources.

Black Gold Rush Sponsor Profile



The Good Planet Company provides an exciting range of earth friendly products such as all-natural bath and body care, organic sleep systems, non-toxic cleaning materials, tree-free paper products, the coolest hemp t-shirts, organic cotton bedding and towels, pet toys and treats, baby products and much more. They have provided number different prizes for the black gold rush draws. A big thank you to the Good Planet Company!

**The Good Planet Company is located at:
1005 Broad Street, Victoria, BC. V8W 2A1.
tel: (250) 477-0146**



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**Michael Silzer –
Wormin' out!**

Michael's strong love for the outdoors and his experience teaching environmental education with the Sierra Club of Canada has fueled his passion to make the world a better place. Dressing like a worm to encourage composting is just one of many things that excite Michael about working at the compost education centre. "As far as my life goes, as a worm, this could be my favorite segment."

Volunteer Appreciation at O.U.R. Ecovillage.

On a sunny Sunday in October, a group of 20 volunteers and staff, carpooled up to Shawnigan Lake for an awe inspiring tour of OUR (One United Resource) Ecovillage. This sustainable intentional community has successfully faced challenges on multiple government levels in order to provide a demonstration community chock full of permaculture gardens, straw bale and cob buildings, and consensus community based decision making.

Our tour leader and Ecovillage visionary Brandy Gallagher-MacPherson started the tour by leading us to the yurt just past vision hill, where she told us the incredible story...continued page 4



Black Gold Rush Challenge

Did you know?

- Composting prevents the release of green house gasses that would otherwise be created by the transport and break down of plant and food material in the landfill.
- You can track your compost and find out your Green House Gas reduction online with the Compost Education Centre's Black Gold Calculator (<http://blackgold.compost.bc.ca>).
- If you regularly track your compost you're are automatically entered to win great prizes from local green businesses in our quarterly draws. The next draw is in early January. So log-on to the black gold calculator, enter your estimated composting volume over the past three months and you could be a winner. Featured prizes this quarter are from Smoking Lily and Shift Organic Fashion.



Staff and Volunteers enjoy Volunteer Appreciation Day at O.U.R. Ecovillage

Giving Goes Green!

Giving to the Compost Ed. Centre just got a whole lot easier and a lot more environmentally friendly.



Now you can choose to save some time and paper by offering your donations on-line through Canada Helps.org.

To donate online, 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

D. Thomas	R. Gaudet	J. Wiczorek
D. Griffith	S. Ryall	E.J. Ives
D. Greig	B. Makepeace-Wilson	

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
Feb 2	Composting Basics	10am-12pm	FREE
Feb 2	Planning Your Year Round Veggie Garden	2-4 pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)
Feb 23	Cane Fruit Production	2-4pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)
Mar 1	Composting Basics	10am-12pm	FREE
Mar 1	Orchard Mason Bees	2-4pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)
March 14/15	Compost Educator Volunteer Training	Fri eve, Sat.	\$100, \$85 refundable after practicum
Mar 29	Intro. to Permaculture Principles	2-4pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)
April 1	Composting Basics	10am-12pm	FREE
April 26	Soil Bldg. and No-Dig Gardening.	2-4pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)

Our Full Events Schedule can be found on our website at www.compost.bc.ca

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

Continued from page 1... What nourishment do you need to act happily as a member of this community of people working together to better our environment? Get to know these answers by knowing your neighbours. Try it, grab a friend, a neighbour, some kitchen scraps and a shovel – dig a hole together, go knee deep (literally), do some trenching, throw in some “food scraps” and cover them up again. Feed the land, feed the soil, & feed your soul. Dig Deep and have a Happy New Year!

To learn more about trenching and how to do it see our attached Trenching Fact Sheet, visit our website at: <http://www.compost.bc.ca/serv/how2/index.html> or call us. 386-WORM (9676)

How to make your Compost Bin Rat Resistant

It can be quite disturbing to open your compost bin and find a rat scampering out!

Here at the Centre we often get calls to our hotline about how to best manage your compost pile to avoid rat problems. Although it is impossible to completely rat proof your compost, here are some tips and rules of thumb to make your heap less attractive to rats.

- Always cover you food scraps. Rats have a great sense of smell and if they smell food they will chew for days to get to the source. A four to six inch layer of browns (leaves, newspaper, cardboard, prunings) will do just fine.

- No meat, bones, dairy, and oily food products. Rats love these treats and they are the biggest attractors of all.

- Aerate you pile. If you aerate your pile once a week rats will not take refuge in your bin because they know it is not safe. Rats are looking for dark, quiet, and undisturbed homes for the winter. Make life difficult for the rats!

- Consider a rat resistant compost bin. The Earth Machine and the Digester that we sell at the Centre are both designed with rodent resistancy in mind. You could also build your own with a lining of ½” hardware cloth (not chicken wire). We have 1 bin and 3 bin designs at the Centre.

- Ensure that the lid is secure. Rats are well adapted to urban environments. So well adapted that they can fit through any opening over a ½ inch. Keeping your lid on tight will ensure that they cannot squeeze through any gaps.

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...where she told us the incredible story of the genesis and nearly magical transformation of the 27 acres on which OUR Ecovillage lies.

We then had the opportunity to check out all of the natural buildings and gardens on-site. It is difficult to describe the interconnections and beauty of the natural buildings with just words. We were all blown away by the insight, creativity and functionality of the natural buildings (cob, straw bale and hybrid). Our tour ended at the healing sanctuary, truly a magnificent building, with various rooms for massage, meditation, birthing, and even dying (the womb to tomb room)!

We could have spent months there, but our tour was only a few short hours. We finished off with a lovely local harvest lunch. Squash soup, warm apple cider, mixed greens and fruit crisp!

It was a wonderful experience for all involved! Thanks to all who participated! We love to love our volunteers.

Maurita Prato -Volunteer Coordinator

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**.