

Coaches help compost starters

NORTH SHORE NEWS AUGUST 1, 2012 9:13 AM



Amanda Vantol (left), of the North Shore Recycling Program, passes on some composting tips to Norgate-area neighbours Rene Kormos, Susan Petrusa and Ghyslaine Gray during a composting clinic in a backyard garden. North Shore Recycling Program is currently offering at-home compost coaching sessions.

Photograph by: NEWS photo, Mike Wakefield

THE words "compost coaching" may conjure up images of a gardener perched intensely over a compost bin coaxing worms to munch through apple cores, but a program offered by the North Shore Recycling Program is a little more down-to-earth.

A recent press release from the North Shore Recycling Program notes by signing up residents can have a compost coach visit their home for a 30-minute training session.

Assistant manager Kathleen O'Malley notes in the press release that participants are guaranteed to learn something new.

She also notes that compost coaches will share tips about minimizing common composting problems, improving finished compost and taking less garbage to the curb.

Participants will also be equipped with the tools and knowledge to ensure that their compost bin will not attract wildlife or pests, notes the press release.

The program has its origins in a 2009 North Shore Recycling Program research study that estimated that each year in North and West Vancouver, approximately 8,000 to 10,000 tonnes of organic waste from single-family homes is generated but never placed curbside for municipal collection and disposal due to backyard composting.

The release notes that Jennifer Meilleur, community programs co-ordinator for the North Shore Recycling Program, said the most common mistake she has seen as a coach is gardeners not adding enough "brown material," which is organic material that has decomposed and lost its nitrogen.

Avid composters like to stockpile leaves during the fall for that, she said. Newsprint will also work in a pinch.

According to a study by the recycling program, households that meet with a coach yield about 20-percent more compost than those who don't.

People in strata buildings, where composts are typically shared, also stand to gain a lot.

Meilleur stated in the release she picked out a whole chicken carcass from a compost once, and noted some people don't know that backyard composts are vegan.

Without backyard composting, it is estimated that North Shore municipalities would require an additional 1,500 truck trips to the North Shore Transfer Station for an additional cost of approximately \$900,000 in tipping fees each year, noted the release.

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