Waste Wisdoms

SPECIAL EDITION WINTER 2021: COMPOSTING

Welcome! In this special edition, we focus on COMPOSTING and introduce the Kensington Estate's newly built compost hub. We explain composting and provide some local options, their benefits and challenges, test your knowledge with our small compost quiz, share the details for a giveaway, and more.

COMPOST: WHAT IS IT?

Much has been written about composting in recent times, as more and more we realise the benefits of using the natural process of nature to decompose organic waste. Nature has been doing it all along.

In short, compost is humanity's version of the humus found in nature and the compost hub/bin/pile is our tool to produce it. In nature, humus is made of broken-down vegetation, which releases nutrients back into the soil for healthy plant growth. This cycle of nature (powered by the sun) has been happening since our earth was formed.

Similarly, under the direction of the compost worker/gardener, the composting process breaks down a mixture of key environmental factors and ingredients (carbon, nitrogen, water and air – with the help of the compost food web) to produce a potent humus fondly named as 'black gold' or compost. By composting, we return the nutrients back to the soil, regenerating soil and fostering plant life.

Finished and final compost appears dark brown, crumbly and smells like a forest floor. When provided with a favourable balance, compost can be produced quickly.



A COMMUNITY COMPOST FOR THE KENSINGTON ESTATE

Located in Kensington's Community Food Forest, this compost hub is a first for the Kensington Estate. At last, residents can contribute their fruit and veggie scraps, and work together to turn their organic waste into nutrient-rich compost for use in the Food Forest, Estate and resident gardens.

The Kensington Estate Compost Hub is a Unison project and was built with grant funding from the Australian Government's Communities Environment Program.

Constructed from salvaged hardwood pallet timber and roofing offcuts from local resource recovery centres, its four bays will hold large amounts of organic waste, otherwise destined for landfill which will reduce the Estate's carbon footprint from not transferring and processing this waste out of Kensington.

GETTING STARTED WITH COMPOSTING

The composting process requires four ingredients: nitrogen, carbon, air and water. Together, they feed microorganisms, which speed up the process of decay.

In a cold pile or lasagna composting, you need to layer fruit and vegetable scraps or green garden waste (as these are nitrogen-rich) with layers of dry brown (carbon-rich) waste, like dried leaves, straw, wood chips, cardboard, etc. Then, add enough water to keep your compost moist but not wet. The compost pile needs to be aerated or turned once a week.

It's important to cut fruit and veggie scraps into smaller pieces as this allows the compost to break down faster and will quicken the pace of composting.



Cross-section of layered browns and greens



HERE IS YOUR HANDY COMPOSTING GUIDE:

YOUR LOCAL COMPOSTING OPTIONS

Now that you know everything about composting, let's look at some local options, including their benefits, challenges and their impacts on your neighbourhood and community.

	Benefits	Challenges
 Use your neighbourhood compost Hubs 1. Kensington Town Hall - at the back of 30-34 Bellair St, Kensington 2. Kensington Food Forest - 56-70 Derby St, Kensington 3. Kensington Child Care Co- operative or The Venny (under construction) 	 Don't have to maintain your own compost bin. Organic food scraps stay in neighbourhood, supporting local community gardens and food growing initiatives with free nutrient-rich compost. Low carbon footprint from not transferring and processing waste out of Kensington. 	 Must walk your waste further to the nearest neighbourhood compost hub.
Use a home compost bin or composting system Low Carbon Footprint	 Easy to access (you don't have far to walk). Use own compost for home gardens. Low carbon footprint from not transferring and processing waste out of Kensington. 	 Need to maintain your own bin. May need some education and training on what ingredients to use and how to maintain your own compost system.
Use the new Council food and garden waste bin	 Easy to access (don't have far to walk). Don't have to maintain your own compost bin. Compost will be used back in agriculture and parks out of area. 	 Increases weekly fossil fuel use and carbon emissions from transporting green waste out of your neighbourhood and to process in an industrial environment. Increased cost of embodied energy from bin production; 120L plastic bin, plastic kitchen caddy and plastic caddy liners Increased environmental cost from plastic degradation. Increased costs in dollars of this service.
Use your general waste bin High Carbon Footprint	• Don't need to think about or take responsibility for separating waste.	 Your waste goes straight to landfill producing methane and carbon emissions. Loss of resource.



Which of these help to breakdown our organic waste?

- O microbes, bacteria, fungi
- O nematodes
- O mites
- O earthworms
- O millipedes
- O snails & slugs
- O white worms
- O slaters

Answer: all of them

Which of these consume the micro- organisms and creatures that breakdown our organic waste?

- o ^{ants}
- o earwigs
 - **rove beetles**
 - centipedes
 - **D** predatory mites
 -)

Answer: all of them

DID YOU KNOW?

Adding compost to soil improves its nutrient content and structure which helps in retaining moisture thereby reducing the need for watering, reduces stormwater runoff and soil erosion.

Compost is a natural fertiliser and can replace costly and energy intensive fertilisers, pesticides and fungicides. Compost aids carbon sequestration by storing carbon and the soil it is added to.



FREE GIVEAWAY

Come and see us at the Unison office to receive a free kitchen compost caddy to store your fruit and veggie scraps before taking them to your preferred compost pile.

Stocks are limited and availability is on a first in, first served basis.

HOME COMPOSTING TIPS

The smaller the raw material the greater the surface to feed microorganisms. This is important for small spaces and to speed up the composting process – aim for 3cm in width.

Green waste and grass clippings are a great source of nitrogen for composting but avoid using weeds or grasses that have gone to seed as they can spread via the compost mixed in your garden.



For more information about

A) The Kensington Estate Compost Hub, contact the Unison Housing office
42 Derby St Kensington I P: 9371 2000 I E: reception.kensington@unison.org.au
B) Kensington Compost Hub, look up *KensingtonTownHallCompost Hub* on Facebook

Contributors: Deb Wilson, Anne Douglas, Jacqueline van Heerden

We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we work and deliver our services.

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