



GUIDE series

EcoStore Volunteer Handbook

Updated June 2008

Mission

Green Calgary empowers Calgarians to create healthy homes and communities through environmental education, products and services.

Vision

Green Calgary will play a significant role in bringing this vision to fruition in five to seven years.... 'Calgarians are world leaders in urban environmental sustainability.'

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The EcoStore is located at 809 4th Ave SW

EcoStore Hours:

Wednesday 10:00am-4:00pm

Thursday 10:00am-7:00pm

Friday 10:00am-4:00pm

Saturday 10:00am-4:00pm

WHY DO WE HAVE AN EcoSTORE TRAINING SESSION?

Green Calgary strives to provide great environmental education, services, and products to Calgarians. In addition we also aim to have a strong volunteer program which provides volunteers with comprehensive training and orientation. It was with these two goals in mind that we decided to hold EcoStore volunteer training sessions before having volunteers work in the EcoStore.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND ON GREEN CALGARY AND THE EcoSTORE PROGRAM:

Green Calgary (formerly Clean Calgary Association)

Green Calgary is an urban environmental non-profit charitable organization. Our mandate is to empower Calgarians to create healthy homes and communities through environmental education, products, and services.

Green Calgary was established in 1977 with a focus on minimizing litter. Over the past 30 years, Green Calgary has evolved and expanded to address a wide range of environmental issues with an emphasis on solid waste reduction through re-use, recycling and composting, and water conservation. Green Calgary receives support from and has numerous partnerships in the private sector, the municipal and provincial government, as well as other local ENGOs.

Green Calgary is an award winning organization that is recognized as a leader in environmental education and community based environmental initiatives, particularly in the areas of recycling and composting. Green Calgary operates three complementary program areas: environmental education, environmental products, and environmental services. Measuring our impacts and retooling our strategies are key elements of all Green Calgary projects, which are based on community-based social marketing concepts.

The EcoStore

Launched in 2004, the EcoStore provides Calgarians with access to a wide range of environmental products to enable them to reduce their eco-footprint. Staff is selective in the products we carry in terms of their purpose, recycled content, place of manufacture, and “recyclability”. The EcoStore endeavours to provide customers with a very positive, interactive experience as well as all the information and education that they seek to effectively use our products or otherwise modify their behaviour. Customers also provide us with useful information.

Product Criteria

All of the products in the EcoStore have gone through rigorous review before being put on the shelf. There is an online product checklist suppliers can fill out from the Green Calgary Website, and this checklist guides the review of the product. The major factors we look at are:

- 1) Is this product local? Where was it made?
- 2) Does the product have minimal packaging?
- 3) Does this product contain recycled material and can it be recycled?
- 4) Does this product directly help Calgarians reduce their waste?
- 5) Is this product made of natural ingredients?

You can view the EcoStore product checklist online at <http://www.greencalgary.org/ecostore/>

Please note:

All information in this handbook and discussed during the EcoStore volunteer training session will be made available to volunteers at the CCA volunteer wall in the CCA office/EcoStore.

In an effort to provide quality service in the EcoStore and positive volunteer experiences, Green Calgary has established a few steps EcoStore volunteers must take in order to become a welcomed member of our EcoStore team.

1. Attend a CCA general volunteer orientation and an EcoStore volunteer training session
2. Complete a Police security check (official letter will be provided by CCA)
3. Sign up for an ongoing shift
4. Volunteer!

EcoStore Volunteer Shifts

Open shifts (less busy store times)

Wed-Saturday 2-4 hours during store hours

WHAT YOU WILL BE DOING

The EcoStore can be a busy place; there are a number of tasks that volunteers can be doing during their shifts in the store.

Environmental Education

The most frequent environmental education that occurs in the EcoStore is on the use of rain barrels and how to compost. Other education is a little more general in nature, such as “what can I do to reduce my waste?” or about specific products.

EcoStore volunteers are able to educate Calgarians about how to reduce their waste and conserve water through the use of rain barrels and composting.

Phones

There are lots of people in the store and the phone is ringing off the hook! This is a typical day in the EcoStore. Volunteers can provide a HUGE service by answering the EcoStore phone, providing basic information about store hours and location, basic education about rain barrels and composting, product availability, and informing people when their order has arrived. Often the phone can be a first point of contact with a Calgarian which can lead to that individual taking a new environmental action, such as starting to use a rain barrel.

Administrative

A busy program requires a lot of administrative tasks to be looked after. These tasks vary day by day, but typically include pricing product, phone calling, taking product orders, product requests and so on.

Behind the Scenes

The EcoStore takes a lot of behind the scenes work for it to function well. Volunteers may find themselves helping behind the scenes by stocking shelves, helping move product to the storage room, helping off load deliveries, etc.

EcoSTORE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A day in the life of an EcoStore volunteer...

- Check in - all EcoStore volunteers check in at the Green Calgary Volunteer wall before starting their volunteer shift. There is a volunteer sign-in sheet, volunteer name tags to be put on, and a space to hang your coat in the staff room.
- Before the EcoStore opens - the EcoStore always opens at 10:00am, prior to opening shelves are restocked, deliveries are received and so on.
- While the store is open a few things happen: the phone is answered, phone messages are returned, customers are helped, and random administrative tasks are completed.
- YEAH! Have fun in the EcoStore.
- When you are finished your volunteer shift sign-out at the CCA Volunteer Wall, grab a spritzer (tasty carbonated fruit juice) and enjoy the rest of your day.

EcoStore Policies

Security Check

A completed security check is required of all EcoStore volunteers.

Staff & Volunteer Visibility

While there is no CCA uniform in the EcoStore, we do ask that volunteers wear volunteer name-tags. These tags identify to Calgarians not only that you are a volunteer but that you are available to help them with their environmental questions. While we do not like to hound Calgarians in the EcoStore, we greet them when they enter the store and gauge the level of assistance they require.

Dress Code

The dress code in the EcoStore is professional but casual. Jeans are permitted, all we ask is that you look presentable and professional. If you can wear your outfit to the beach, maybe keep it for the beach.

Cash handling

As of June 2008 CCA volunteers are not permitted to handle cash, only CCA staff are able to handle cash, credit cards, and debit cards. If in the future this policy changes, all volunteers will be informed.

Refunds

The EcoStore does not offer refunds.

Discounts

The only situations when discounts will be available in the EcoStore are with an EcoStore coupon, the 10% discount available to CCA members, or during an EcoStore sale.

Please note that for corporate CCA members the discount is only available for product purchased for the business, not for individual employee purchases.

Gift Certificates

CCA Gift Certificates are available for any amount and expire one full year after the date they were purchased.

Pre-orders

There are pre-orders for rain barrels and red wiggler worms. Pre payment is required.

Workshops

Green Calgary runs a number of public workshops, people must pre-pay for the workshops in order to hold their place. The workshops are \$5/person.

Memberships

Green Calgary has a number of membership types that are good for one full year from the date of purchase. Memberships can be purchased and renewed in the EcoStore and over the phone:

Corporate \$200

Non-profit \$75

Individual \$50

Low-income/student \$15

WHAT NEXT

After attending the EcoStore volunteer training session what do you do next to volunteer?

- First of all you will have to go down to the closest police station to where you live/work and get a security check. You will have to present an official letter from CCA, pay \$5.00 (which will be reimbursed during your first shift with a receipt), and ask that the security check be sent to Green Calgary or bring it in with you at your first volunteer shift.
- Once your security check is completed all you need to do is sign up for a shift and show up! You can sign up for an on-going shift or sign up for one shift and decide what time/day works best for you. You can sign up by emailing or calling the Community Organizer, Heather, or in the EcoStore on the CCA Volunteer Wall volunteer sign-up. We strongly recommend signing up for an ongoing shift.

THANK YOU FOR VOLUNTEERING! :)

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Community Organizer

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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Outdoor Composting

Our outdoor continuous feed composting bin is called an **Earth Machine** and is made in Ontario, Canada from a minimum of 25% recycled content. Earth Machines are 1 meter squared, break down into 4 pieces for easy transport, and come with an instruction booklet and 4 pegs. The City of Calgary subsidizes the Earth Machines, thus we are able to sell them all year long for \$25 each tax included.

The first question we ask customers when purchasing a composter is “Have you composted before?”. When you determine whether the customer is an expert composter, requires a little refresher, or needs all the basic info to get started, please guide them with the following information:

1. Place your earth machine composter in a location in your yard that is convenient for you. A place where you will use it all year long, even during winter. A sunny location is ideal but not at all necessary. (Keep adding to your pile in Winter, and then in the Spring you'll notice your pile shrink as the thawing process aids with decomposition.)
2. Be sure to water your compost pile as Calgary is very dry. There is no specific amount to use, simply keep it like a wrung out sponge.
3. Aerate your pile weekly...no more than once or twice a week. Use a wingdigger, pitchfork, shovel or a stick to poke holes in the pile and allow for air circulation (please demonstrate the wingdigger aerating tool we sell for \$17 each, however we are happy if a customer already owns an appropriate tool they may reuse).
4. Most importantly you'll want to layer your greens and browns and strive for 50% of each. Direct the customers attention to the poster on The EcoStore wall.
5. Finally please let customer's know that
 - a. each composter comes with an instruction booklet
 - b. they can call our composting hotline with any questions (the compost hotline is listed on our business card which you may hand out, and on the website)
 - c. we offer composting 90-minute workshops for \$5 each (schedule is written on the cash desk and on our website). Customers must pre-pay as workshops fill up fast.
6. Congratulate yourself on such great customer service...and know you are of great value to Green Calgary and Calgary's composting citizens



Frequently Asked Questions about Outdoor Composting:

I. Eek, I have mice in my compost bin.

- Your compost pile is too dry. Try watering it and keeping it like a wrung out sponge. Mice won't live in a damp home.

2. Pehew, my compost bin is smelly.

- Your compost pile has too many greens and not enough browns. Try adding more browns.

3. The neighbourhood kids stole my earth machine lid.

- The EcoStore sells earth machine pieces separately, however only if available.

4. How soon will I have finished compost?

- That depends on many different factors, but if you're really good you could have it in 3 months, however the average Calgarian will have it in 1 year to 18 months.

5. My organics and yard waste is not breaking down. Should I add activator to my compost?

- No, there is no need to buy an activator. Ask how long this has been a problem. See faq #4 above, or if longer than 1 year suggest that they add soil from another part of their yard to the compost pile to introduce new micro-organisms. Or they could try adding coffee grounds which are a natural accelerator. Note that Starbucks gives away free coffee grounds in large quantities.

Greens include kitchen scraps. However meats, oils, bones or dairy should NOT be added to your compost pile. Greens also include green yard waste such as grass and plant clippings.

Browns include brown or dry yard waste (suggest that customer may stockpile leaves to dry beside their composter to use throughout the year). Browns also include shredded newsprint (as all newspaper is printed with soy-based ink. Not the glossy flyers though.), coffee grounds, dryer lint, egg shells, etc.

Indoor Vermicomposting

Customers can compost indoors using tropical red wiggler worms. The EcoStore sells vermicomposting bins for \$32 each, a great book called "**Worms Eat My Garbage**" for \$20, vermicomposting workshops for \$5 each, and of course worms at \$30 for a 1/2 lb and \$60 for a full lb. However we do not keep worms in stock. Customers must pre-pay and worms are delivered every two weeks. It is also very important that customers are aware that if their worms arrive to The EcoStore on Thursday, that they must be picked up by 4pm on Saturday. If not, unfortunately the little living wigglers will die and customers will lose their payment in full.

Again like outdoor composting, the first question we ask customers is if they are familiar with indoor composting with red wiggler worms. Following is all the information required to detail the process and answer customer questions:

- Redworms, micro-organisms and macro-organisms break down the organic materials and turn it into worm castings (in other words...worm poo). Worms eat twice their body weight every 48 hours.
 - Redworms prefer an environment that is dark, moist and moderate in temperature (5 to 27 degrees Celsius. Worms will not survive freezing nor high temperatures). Redworms have an aversion to light. That is one reason why worm bins should be covered and why worms are seldom found on the surface of the bedding material. It is also why worms will never escape from the cozy confines of a worm bin.
 - Feel free to open The EcoStore worm bin and move the bedding to show customers what it looks and smells like inside. Let the customers know that this



bin is used for organic lunch waste from about 10 staff people. We feed the worms once a week instead of every day to reduce disturbing them. Suggest the customer does the same. Simply keep a small container under the sink or in the freezer to hold kitchen scraps. We harvest the bin every 6 months. Harvesting is separating the worm castings from the worms.

- When you start off your worm bin, it is recommended that you place a layer of shredded newspaper at the bottom and then add the worm on top. Place all the worms together—don't spread them out. Feed the worm a **SMALL** amount of organic waste directly on top of where you have placed them.
- Fill the rest of the bin with shredded newspaper. The newspaper should feel moist like a wrung out sponge. This bedding is needed for a variety of reasons including controlling moisture level, providing extra food if needed, a place for breeding, to contain smell if any, and to balance PH. Moisten your newspaper if your bin is dry, let the newspaper suck up moisture if your bin is too wet.
- As your worms mature and get used to your bin, you will be able to feed them more. When adding food, be sure to place it under the shredded newspaper. Be sure to feed you worms next to the spot you fed them last time.

There are three methods to harvest your worm bin:

Option 1 – Using light to harvest

Spread out a tarp or plastic sheet. Take the worm box contents and create small mounds over the entire tarp. After a few minutes, worms will migrate away from the sun and to the bottom of the piles. Scrape the top layer of castings off, returning uneaten material or bedding to the worm box. When you're down to a pile of wiggling worms, place them back in the box and move onto the next pile.



Option 2 – Partition method

Move the contents of your bin to one side, place fresh bedding and a small handful of soil in the empty space. Bury all added food scraps there for a month or two. Harvest the other side after most of the worms have migrated to the new food and bedding.

Option 3 – Straining

Put the contents of your worm bin (worms, food, bedding, and all!) into a colander over a 5 gallon bucket. Gently pour water through the colander. Worm castings will dissolve into the water, creating compost tea. Put worms, uneaten food and bedding back in the worm box.

Frequently Asked Questions about Indoor Vermicomposting:

1. Can I put worms in my outdoor compost bin?

- No. Our red wiggler worms are tropical and will not survive outdoor temperatures. They are for indoor composting only.

2. Do I have to find a worm-sitter when I go on vacation?

- No. Redworms can live for 3-4 weeks without food and supervision. Take your holidays guilt-free.

Water Conservation with Rain Barrels

The EcoStore sells 3 different models of Rain Barrels for outdoor water conservation. Collecting rain water is beneficial for your plants and garden as the water is at the correct temperature and contains nutrients. Using rain water reduces pressure on the water treatment system by not using tap water. Finally, collecting rain water in a rain barrel rather than letting it run off into the sewer system reduces sediment and chemicals entering our river system.

They are second-hand plastic barrels being reused as rain barrels, instead of being dumped into the landfill and are manufactured right here in Calgary. They can be painted whatever color you like, but it is recommended you sand the outside of your barrel first. If you want to get a watering can or bucket underneath your tap then you will want to raise your barrel on cinder blocks or the like. Do not let your barrels fill up with water in the winter because if the water freezes the barrel will probably crack.

Model A Rain Barrel

1 tap 45 gallon barrel with 1" hole, includes tap \$65

Water diverter kit \$20

- When barrel is full, water will be diverted to the downspout
- Available in blue or white, dependant on availability
- Approximate dimensions are 2 ft wide x 3 ft tall



Utilize every drop of water with Model A. It is connected to a 7 foot hose running from a Water Saver Diverter on your downspout so when the barrel is filled, the rest of the rain will be directed down the downspout instead of overflowing out of the barrel and being wasted. There are no holes to cover to keep mosquitoes out as the lid is completely sealed, and it is easy to disconnect the barrel from the diverter in the winter. Model A barrels are designed to be attached to a second barrel (optional).

Model B Rain Barrel

2 tap 45 gallon barrel with 4" mesh hole, includes 2 taps \$70



- When barrel is full, water will overflow from 4" mesh hole on top
- We recommend not placing this barrel next to a basement window
- Available in blue or white, dependant on availability
- Approximate dimensions are 2 ft wide x 3 ft tall

Model B is ideal for a downspout that is not against the house or close to a basement window. The bottom tap is where you will retrieve your rain water, the upper tap is ideal for attaching a hose to run into a rain garden or shrub to put some of the overflowing rain water to good use.

This rain barrel comes with a 4" mesh covered collector hole to keep out mosquitoes and any debris that may be in your downspout. This barrel comes with two taps and a lid that cannot be removed.

Oak Rain Barrel

May be customized to either Model A or B \$150

(+ \$20 for diverter if choosing Model A)

Delivery within Calgary (1-3 barrels) \$ 25

(additional \$25 for 4 -6 barrel delivery)

- Orders take approximately 2 weeks, as we do not stock this item
- Barrel will leak with first rainfall, until boards swell
- Oak barrels weigh 80-115 lbs
- If you choose pick-up instead of home delivery, be sure to bring two individuals for lifting



Rain Barrel Stands

Stand \$105

Stand with Hose Holder \$135

- Made locally in Fort Macleod
- Supports weight of our full plastic barrel or full oak barrel



Information Services & E-newsletter

We respond to thousands of public requests for environmental information. Calgarians want to know how to recycle their household waste and otherwise reduce their environmental footprint.

Please contact the Green Calgary if you would like more information about our programs, our e-newsletter, and how to volunteer with CCA.

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