



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: VOLUNTEERING

The following are some of the most common FAQs that volunteers are asked while facilitating public workshops or helping out at community events.

The majority of FAQs are in regards to composting and rain barrels. The provided answers are intended to act as a guide to assist volunteers in sharing their knowledge and the types of resources Green Calgary offers Calgarians interested in taking positive environmental action at home, school and work.

The FAQs below are only a fraction of the information available on Green Calgary's website [greencalgary.org](http://www.greencalgary.org), through presentations & workshops, workplace services and the online tip sheets and resource guides. If an individual is seeking further information please refer them to either Green Calgary's website or the appropriate program.

Please keep in mind that it is always better to be honest when you do not have the answer

Green Calgary Association Volunteer Program

Website: <http://www.greencalgary.org/get-involved/become-green-calgary-volunteer/>

to a question. If you cannot answer a question, let them know you're a volunteer and that you would be happy to take down the individual's contact information and pass it along to a Green Calgary staff member who would be glad to provide an answer.

Remember to share your own personal stories and experiences as appropriate, as you may have a lot of great knowledge to share with your fellow Calgarians. Green Calgary is grateful to have such enthusiastic and passionate volunteers. Keep sharing your passion for sustainable living!



COMPOSTING

Why should I compost?

Organic materials are a valuable resource in the garden either as compost or mulch as it improves soil texture and plant health, prevents erosion and holds moisture and nutrients. Learn more from Green Calgary's free compost guides available online. Finished compost made from household wastes is free to the home owner (i.e. you don't have to buy fertilizer). Waste diverted to composting also saves The City of Calgary (and ultimately the taxpayer) the cost of collecting it to make their own compost. Home compost works well with The City's Green Cart program, as you can put items that cannot go in your backyard composter into the Green Cart.

How long does it take to produce compost?

Under typical Calgary conditions, with a moderate amount of care and attention, it will take a full growing season to produce a stable, humus like "finished" compost. This also assumes that large amounts of high carbon materials that are slow to break down (such as sawdust or wood bark) are not being composted.

What can I do with compost?

There are a variety of uses for finished compost. Its most beneficial use is as soil amendment to add slow release nutrients into an ornamental or vegetable garden. Mixed with garden soil, it will help to improve its water retention properties, its workability and pH buffering capacity. Finished compost can also be used as a potting soil amendment for house plants. The caution here is that it should be completely sterilized first through heat treatment in order not to infect house plants with

insects that migrate into the compost pile during its later, cooler stages.

Will I produce too much compost?

The volume of finished compost produced is very small in comparison to the volume of the original waste materials. It can be used virtually any place in the garden. The more usual problem with experienced home composters is an insufficient quantity of the material rather than an oversupply.

Can I compost pet wastes?

Care must be taken when dealing with pet wastes. Wastes from dogs, cats and other carnivores may contain human pathogens that survive the home composting process. These materials should therefore not be used in food gardens. A digester may be used to deal with pet waste though. This is a separate container from the compost bin and when used according to the directions, is very effective in dealing with pet waste. Note: this unit is NOT to be used in or near food gardens! If you are uncertain, please simply give pet waste to The City of Calgary through their Green Cart program by bagging it in a certified compostable bag and putting it in your Green Cart.

Can I compost if I live in an apartment or condo?

Green Calgary provides the materials and information (including public workshops) to do two types of indoor composting: vermicomposting and Bokashi. Vermicomposting or composting with worms is the act of using red-wiggler worms to turn your organic waste into a soil amendment. (continued on next page)

COMPOSTING (CONTINUED)

Can I compost if I live in an apartment or condo?
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You can purchase everything you need to get started or if you just want to try it out, you can rent fully functioning bins for 4 weeks. Contact the Green Calgary EcoStore to learn more. or download our free vermicomposting guide. Bokashi is a Japanese term for “fermented organic matter”. Bokashi composting is perfect for those who live in condos and are unable to have a regular outdoor compost bin or for those who wish to have their compost break down more quickly. All you need to start is a bokashi compost bin, bokashi, and your kitchen food scraps. When your bin is full, bury the compost in a hole in your yard or add it to a friend’s outdoor compost bin. You can purchase everything you need to get started at the Green Calgary EcoStore or download our free Bokashi guide to learn more.

Are pets, rodents or other animals attracted to a compost pile?

Animals are typically attracted to a compost pile for two reasons: food and warmth. Cats, dogs and rodents will not be attracted if meat, bones, fish and other food products eaten by these animals are not in the compost pile. Maintaining a hot compost pile will also aid in keeping these animals away. In the winter, small rodents, such as mice and voles, will be attracted by the insulating and easy burrowing qualities afforded by a dry open compost pile. Keeping the contents of the bin moist (the consistency of a damp wrung out sponge) and aerating the pile will prevent pests from making nests. Additionally, preventing access to the entire pile is a great deterrent. Simply

enclose or "pest-proof" the container or bin. The composter should be equipped with a tight fitting lid, a closed perforated or wire mesh bottom, and air holes less than an inch in diameter. Spaces that might provide entrance into the pile should be blocked off with sturdy half inch (or smaller) wire mesh.

How do I prevent attracting flies & other insects?

Flying insects are attracted to kitchen wastes with a high sugar content such as fruit and vegetable peelings. These materials should be immediately buried under leaves or newspaper or covered with other organics inside a compost pile. The maintenance of a hot compost pile will also destroy insects at the larval stage.

Where can I purchase a composter?

Green Calgary sells Canadian made compost bins all year round. To learn more, visit green-calgary.org/ecostore.

RAIN BARRELS

Where can I purchase a rain barrel?

Green Calgary sells Rain barrels all year long at Green Calgary Store located at #100, 301 14th Street NW. Every year from late March to the end of June we run community Rain Barrel Sales when barrels are sold on parking lots in locations around the city. Rain barrels are available in blue or white, and are made from repurposed, food-grade beverage containers. Recycling these barrels keeps them out of our landfills and turns them into effective water collection devices. Learn more at greencalgary.org/ecostore.

Why should I use rain barrel?

A considerable portion of the City of Calgary's total electricity bill is spent on water treatment. Using a rain barrel means that less water needs to be treated, cutting down on water waste and reducing demand on water treatment, which in the end saves us all money. Rainwater is soft, non-chlorinated water and in the summer is at the perfect temperature for plants, trees, and shrubs. Using a rain barrel reduces runoff and keeps H₂O out of the sewers and our rivers, helping to mitigate flooding.

How do you maintain a rain barrel?

Rain barrels are relatively maintenance-free during the spring and summer months. In the colder months, you want to winterize your barrel to avoid cracking your barrel and/or hose. Green Calgary provides a fall reminder and steps to winterize your barrel online.

Will mosquitoes breed in my barrel?

Empty your rain barrel completely once a week. This will kill all mosquito larvae that may be in your barrel. Where your downspout enters the barrel, ensure you have a fine piece of mesh to block mosquitoes from entering. And make sure your barrel is covered. This will not only keep out mosquitoes, but other curious animals. Keep your barrel free of organic material.

How do I set up my rain barrel?

Depending on the style of barrel and your attachments, you may take different steps to install your barrel. It's important to ensure that whatever option you choose, you direct any overflow away from your home's foundation and towards trees, shrubs, or a garden. Green Calgary provides installation instructions and support for all the rain barrels we sell.

