

District of Kent Household Organic Waste Composting Project



Turning Waste Into An Opportunity



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Volunteer Feedback

Thirty-six households and one school participated

Total volunteers enrolled	43
School teachers	5
Participation withdrawn	2
Total without school	36
Interviewed	30 (83 % of total without school)

Thirty-eight volunteers were enrolled in the program and five elementary school classes with approximately 100 children. Two volunteers had to withdraw for reasons not related to the program; thirty-one volunteering households were interviewed.

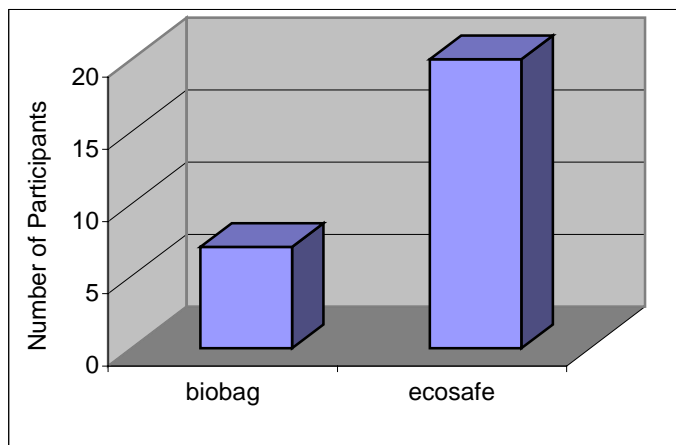
Simple, clean and odorless procedure

All participants found the explanation of the procedure, and the information (as to what belongs into the bin and what does not) as sufficient and very easy to understand. Many participants were very surprised at how many things were included in the list that can be composted, such as meat, hair or cigarette butts.

None of the participants could detect any odor from the small container; neither did the small kitchen collection container cause any other inconvenience. In fact, many mentioned that they liked the 'handy' size, which allowed them to put it easily under the kitchen sink. Only one participant did not like the idea of a small container on the kitchen counter and suggested to modify the container so that it can be mounted to a wall.

3 out of 4 favor the 'Ecosafe' bag

Twenty-seven participants tested both bags (three people received only the Ecosafe bag as they enrolled later in the program). Of these twenty-seven, twenty participants favored the 'Ecosafe' bag (also called '2nd bag' or 'green bag'). All twenty-seven participants agreed that there was no difference between the bags in smell when full – because there was no smell.



The 'Ecosafe' bag was considered as sturdier and easier to close as it exceeds the size of the kitchen collection container. Several households reported that the Biobag broke or leached. Those who prefer the 'Biobag' said it fits better in the container and has a silky texture (better feel to it).

Besides, it gives the impression to be better biodegradable. One participant mentioned that a dark bag hides better the content and reduces the 'disgust'. One participant said it would be good if they could also have access to even smaller bags to take along when walking the dog.

The green bin works well for garage or outdoor storage

All participants were very satisfied with the green bin and said it was the perfect size. Most kept the bins under a shelter and did not have problems with wind or animals. Two participants mentioned that strong wind blows the bin over, and one of these two participants also offered an apparently proven (by experience with other bins) solution: to put a brick inside. One participant mentioned a slight odor after having had fish dinner. One participant reported that raccoons had repeatedly tried to open the bins – without success. An 86-year old participant, probably the most senior participant in this program, said it is a perfect size for her to handle and to take to the curb without help. Most participants did not use half of the capacity of the bin. Only one participant said the size is small if the bins are not collected less often than once a week.

Positive feedback from family and friends

All participants that had the opportunity to discuss the program with friends and family reported very positive feedback. Even initially reluctant family members participated voluntarily after they understood how easy and clean the organic waste separation is.

Possible improvements

All participants considered the program as efficient, well done and very handy and generally, could not think of ways to improve the program. Some participants, however, would like see a coordination of the organic waste collection with the collection of other garbage, i.e. to have all garbage collection on the same day. Other suggestions are: garbage bins with two compartments (based on an experience made by the participant in Europe), and to laminate and magnetize the list to place it on the refrigerator.

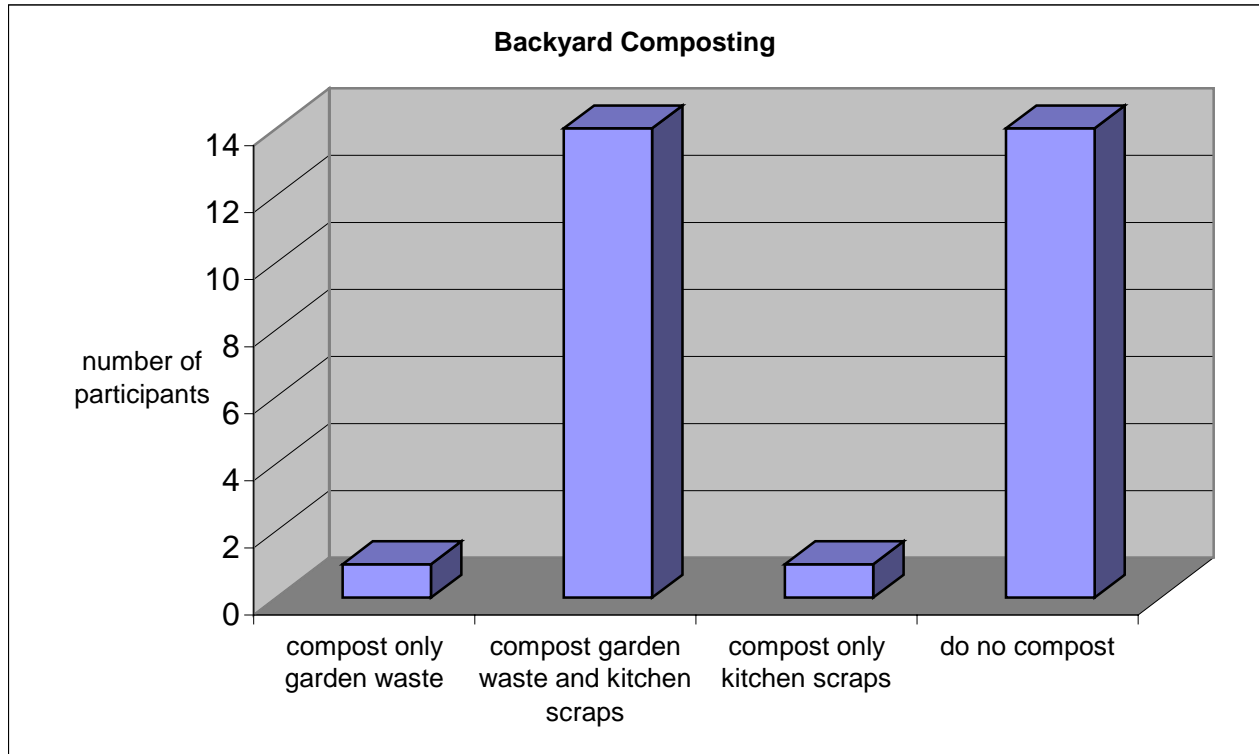
Encouraging the reluctant

Most participants considered public education and publicity as important ways to encourage more reluctant community members to participate. When advertising, stress should be placed on showing how simple the procedure is. Word of mouth was also considered as an important part of an advertising strategy. Two participants had the idea to make waste collection 'trendy' by associating waste collection to 'success stories' with young couples as 'heroes'. One participant said that a flyer in the newspaper or in the mailbox is more efficient than an advertisement in the newspaper.

Many participants also believed that working with children and teenagers is very important to instill a natural awareness of our environment into the future generations, but also to indirectly address the parents. Several participants said that their children had actually made them participate in the program.

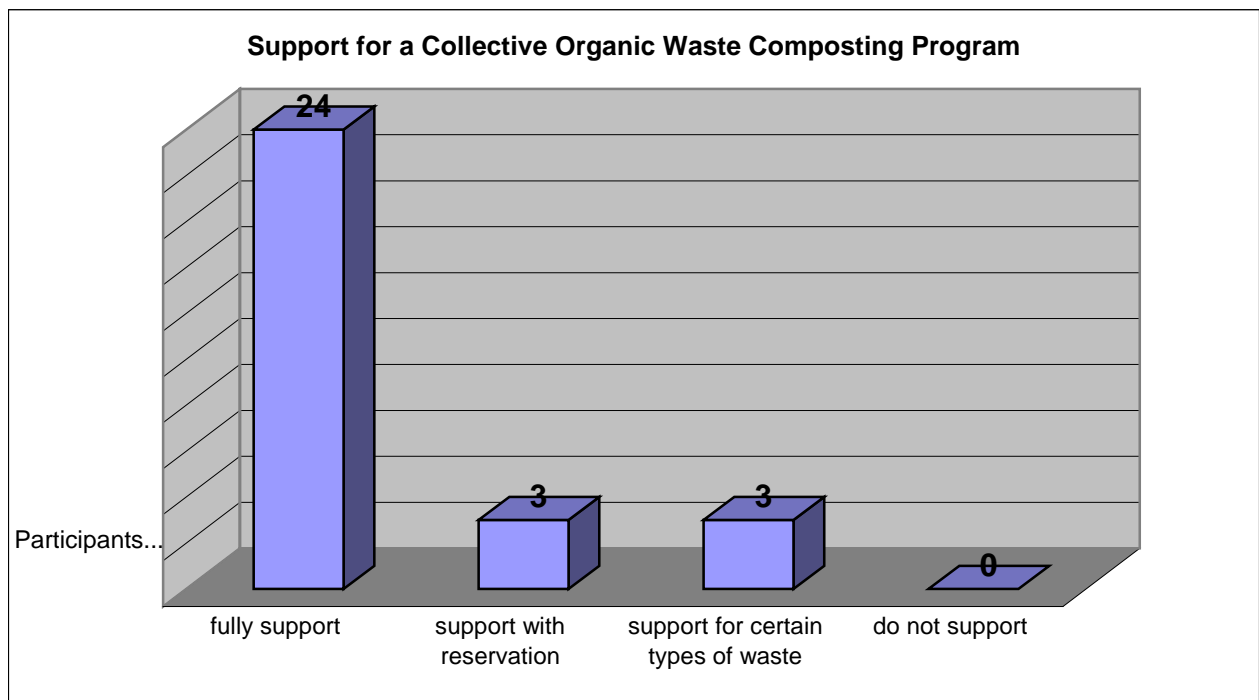
Cost was a repeatedly mentioned as a concern. Twenty percent of the participants mentioned that the cost of the collection plays a crucial role in convincing people and that the collection should be at no or less cost than existing programs. One participant believes that no cost will be also an incentive to avoid that some people dump garbage into the organic waste as a way of 'cheating' to save on garbage collection taxes.

Backyard composting



Fifteen participants, or half of the interviewed participants, have their own compost pile in the backyard. Most households with composting pile also compost their kitchen scraps. One participant composts only kitchen scraps in a black plastic bin. However, approximately half of the households that currently do not have a backyard composting pile possess previous composting experience.

Collective composting is supported



All participants prefer to have a collective organic composting facility. A collective organic composting is considered as cleaner and more efficient than a backyard composting pile. A collective organic composting facility can handle much more and different material than backyard compost piles (for hygienic reasons and to avoid the presence of rodents and scavengers). Some participants wished to have access to composted material, at least at a reasonable price (4 participants). A few participants mentioned that their support depends on the cost of the program (3 participants). Two participants said they would contribute only the material in excess of their own composting pile, and one participant said to contribute only organic waste from animal origin (meat, grease, etc).

Integrated garbage pick-up preferred

Twenty-six participants (87%) would like to have an integrated garbage pick-up (that includes separate collection of garbage, recyclable material and organic waste). Four households said their answer would depend on the cost of the program.

All participants thought that garden waste should be included in an organics collection program, except for two participants who said it depends on the cost. In particular elderly people consider the collection of garden waste as a very convenient service. According to one participant, this would also prevent illegal dumping.

Environmentally aware participants

Twenty-nine households rated themselves on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is little and 10 is very environmentally aware). Three households rated themselves 5 ('average environmentally aware'), four households rated themselves 10 (very environmentally aware). The average rating was 7.9, i.e. the participants are more environmentally aware (based on their own appreciation) than the average community member supposedly is.

Experiences from other communities

Only two participants have ever lived in a community that collected organic waste (one lived in Guelph, one lived in the Netherlands). Both described the programs as being well received by the community (and as something 'normal' in the case of the Netherlands). Three participants reported indirect experiences (relatives or friends living in communities with organic waste collection) with excellent results in two cases, but a less successful in one case where a relatively drastic enforcement and control was resented by the population.