

MEDIA RELEASE

International Composting Awareness Week (ICAW) 2010

“Compost, Help Scrap Carbon Pollution!”

The Centre for Organic & Resource Enterprises (CORE) with the support of Compost Australia (a division of the Waste Management Association of Australia) has launched the fifth International Composting Awareness Week 2010 (ICAW) throughout Australia.

ICAW is being held from Sunday 2nd to Saturday 8th May with a week of activities and events to promote the awareness of the importance of this valuable organic resource and the environmental benefits composting affords our communities.

The major objectives of ICAW

ICAW aims to:

- Increase the diversion of organics from the main waste stream through increasing awareness of, and participation in centralised composting, kerbside, home composting & community composting
- Increase awareness of, and participation in, the proper use of "soil-improving composts"
- Help reduce and recover food waste
- Highlight the environmental and social benefits of composting including the opportunities to reduce our carbon emissions

Composting benefits Australian communities

“Each year over half of our household garbage, is made up of food and garden organics. Most of this material can be recycled by composting it”, says Eric Love Chairman of CORE.

“Composting is not new. Compost has been used in crop production for over 4000 years. Artificial fertilizers only became widely available a century ago. Australia is an old and eroded continent, that is suffering from land degradation”

“As organic waste decomposes in landfill it produces the greenhouse gases, methane and carbon dioxide. These greenhouse gases contribute to worldwide climate change. Most landfill gas is made up of 54% methane and 40% carbon dioxide. Methane is twenty four times more damaging as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.”

Eric continues that “ironically, if all this organic material was diverted from landfills and properly composted, it could be used to reverse the affects of climate change. By applying this compost to gardens, farms and other land uses, millions of tonnes of carbon will be stored in the soil. This acts to lower the atmospheric temperatures that lead to changes in our climate.”

“Indeed compost produced by the recycled organics industry is already providing Australian landscape, horticulture and agricultural industries with affordable solutions to improve productivity and environmental outcomes. Recycled carbon based products are also being effectively used to treat contaminated stormwater runoff and enabling the water to be reused or more safely released into our waterways”, says Mr Wadewitz.

Composting, a solution at the burning issues

Australians are the second highest waste producers in the world, second only to Americans. Australians now throw away 3.3 million tonnes of food every year – up to a quarter of the country's food supplies.

Emissions from landfills are part of the Australian Federal Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS). If everyone composted, the total waste going to landfill could decrease by up to a third. So emissions and fees from landfills will drop off.

Composting is definitively one of the most important leverages to achieve the 66% diversion rate target, an overall state target for the reduction of waste by 2014.

Finally, 2010 is the year of the bio diversity. This is the perfect time to reflect on our achievements to safeguard biodiversity and focus on the urgency of our challenge for the future.

ICAW 10 Governmental Support

ICAW is supported by State, Regional and Local Governments around Australia. The New South Wales Government through the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, The Victorian Government through Sustainability Victoria and the South Australia Government through Zero Waste have supported ICAW over a number of years.

Regional groups of councils such as the Metropolitan Waste Management Group have assisted their member councils in the lead up to the week.

The key points to know about composting

By turning food scraps and organic garden waste into compost you can:

- ✓ Improve soil quality and garden vitality by releasing the rich nutrients in the compost into your soil
- ✓ Recycle valuable nutrients and reduce the use of artificial fertilisers
- ✓ Prevent greenhouse gas emissions and reduces the amount of organic waste going to landfill
- ✓ Improve water savings
- ✓ Save your money

What to add to your home composting bin:

Vegetable and fruit scraps, vegetable oil, prunings and lawn clippings, tea bags and coffee, grounds, vacuum dust, shredded paper and cardboard, used potting mix, egg shells, flowers.

What not to add to your home composting bin:

Meat and bones, dairy products, diseased plants, metals, plastic and glass, animal manures, fat, magazines, large branches, weeds that have seeds or underground stems, bread or cake, sawdust from treated timber.

The events surrounding ICAW 2010

A range of events are held throughout the week from Sunday May 2nd to Saturday, May 8th. Industry events including government briefings and marketing forums, community and educational events are being held across Australia.

CORE has developed a dedicated Local Government ICAW program delivering special services to councils around Australia. It provides a platform to assist councils in the organisation of their own initiatives.

All events can be viewed, registered and downloaded from the Calendar pages within the website www.compostweek.com.au.

Final Remarks

It is important for all Australians that International Composting Awareness Week achieves its stated objectives. We all need to be aware of the benefits afforded to all of us when our business communities, households and agricultural sector composts. Composting is the intelligent alternative. We can compost to help scrap carbon pollution.

Composting is the responsible and sustainable thing to do for our planet.

More information and resources can be found at www.compostweek.com.au.

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