

# Manual for the compost caring team

## SUMMARY

Compost caring team consisting of 2-3 persons per site. Sign an agreement with the municipality or other landowners if necessary or possible. The role of the compost caring team is voluntary, and anyone can pass it on at any time. For more information about the composting process itself, go to How to compost document.

## THE COMPOST CARING TEAM

**Manages the community:** The compost caring team consists of a contact person for the community, a moderator of communication platforms like Facebook, email or messenger group, people to monitor and train the members of the community and someone who maintains the finances.

**Maintains the compost and composter:** The compost caring team ensures care of the compost by checking the composter and compost regularly. The compost caring team has knowledge of how to solve the most common issues and secures dry carbonaceous material and tools and their storage.

**Organizes collective work** like compost turning, harvesting or other necessary tasks.

## COMMUNITY MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

### Distribute tasks among 2-3 people

**Tip 1:** Rotate the primarily responsible person of the compost caring team based on time periods, work shifts, etc.

**Tip 2:** Divide tasks according to skills (someone moderates communication, someone is responsible for the composting process itself, someone organizes on-site events, etc.)

### Update the list of participants

Tip: Use a shared spreadsheet that is constantly updated. Newly registered composting enthusiasts are recorded by the compost caring teams on the list of participants and later on the waiting list. If someone leaves the community, the compost caring team contacts potential substitutes.

### Monitoring and training new applicants

Tip: Monitor the email or registration form regularly. When accepting new members as active composters, send them an email summarizing all the information from the introductory workshop that they need to know in order to compost properly or meet them at the composting site and explain the process as well as the dos and don'ts. If you have one, hand out a leaflet containing basic information.

### Managing finances

**Tip 1:** Keep the cash box at home and record all expenses and income in a shared spreadsheet.

**Tip 2:** Open a transparent bank account if worthwhile.

## COMPOST MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Check the composting process regularly by sight and smell. See if it needs aeration, water or more dry material.
- Carry out small tasks like watering or adding more carbonaceous material.
- Call for action in case of larger tasks that need more hands like turning the compost. (see „Organizing collective work“ section)
- Secure dried carbonaceous material, for example wood shavings or chips.

- **Tip:** Check with the community for contacts with arborists or carpentry workshops.
- Ensure storage of dried carbonaceous material
- **Tip:** If you don't have a shed, store it where compost matures (usually in the 3rd chamber). Ideally, the community joins forces to build an additional chamber to store this material.
- Monitor whether community members are sorting bio-waste correctly. Visually check if people are depositing inappropriate materials (plastic, diapers, etc.) and inform them if necessary.
- Monitor the moisture of the compost visually and by fist test.

### Organizing collective work to turn and harvest compost

The compost caring team organizes turning and compost harvesting, suggests dates and informs the community via the agreed communication channels.

- Compost turning: about five times a year (average cycle time of 75 days = 2.5 months)
- Compost harvesting: about twice a year

At least two people participate in the collective work. Keep in mind that sometimes more people are needed (e.g. for combined shifts of turning and harvesting together).

**Tip 1:** Pre-determine turning and harvesting services at the beginning of the year. This could serve as a rough estimate of yearly events.

**Tip 2:** Announce a shift with the option for any number of volunteers to sign up in advance.

**Tip 3:** Order turning as a paid service from an external company, if such services exist in your area.

### Store tools and equipment and purchase any missing items:

**Tip:** Inquire within the community about storage spaces and buy missing tools from a shared fund.

**Maintain a care journal** to make clear when the compost was last turned when handing over stewardship. You can also use it to update your community on how much organic waste they have already composted.

**Tip:** Use the shared spreadsheet.

### Ensure the distribution of the harvested compost:

**Tip 1:** Apply compost in the surrounding area

**Tip 2:** Share the compost for the community's own use and for the needs of the housing association.

## Composter Care responsibilities

### Regularly visit the compost site

**Tip:** Visit the composting site initially once a week, later once every two weeks, and when composting is established, once a month is sufficient.

If your composter is locked, maintain the locks to prevent sticking by lubricating them with grease.

### Preventively treat composters

Preventatively treat the composters with linseed oil at least once per year.

If there are flies, add a layer of dry material.

## TIPS FOR COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

**To bring the community together**, consider using informal language and, if you meet some members in person at the composting site, always introduce yourself by name or keep asking people's names and engage in conversation to find out what aspects of composting they enjoy most.

**Prevent disputes** - you may not always agree, but you can set ground rules at the start about how the community will decide when there is disagreement (e.g. what to put in the compost and what not to put in the compost).

**Part of the role of the compost caring team is to connect members.** It helps to remember members by name and to facilitate introductions between members at joint events. For larger gatherings, it may be useful to bring some masking tape and a marker to make simple name badges.

You can elevate a work shift into a community meeting by **combining the work with a subsequent neighborhood picnic, activities for children, or a planning meeting about how to use the compost to beautify the area.** The administrators or other active community members can be binding figures

in the community and help revitalize the program during regular meetings, work shifts, or neighborhood gatherings at the compost bin or its vicinity, such as a community picnic.

**The community will connect better if the communication group serves not only to share composting tips, but also to share household surplus items, seek neighborhood assistance, or offer joint activities.** You can also share other composting methods there - you might find that some members are fans of vermicomposting or bokashi.

Email is the most wide-reaching communication method. However, **instead of sending everything as text, you can include a link to a short video summarizing the latest composting updates** (this can also be shared on Facebook) or attach a link to a survey. Ideally, the text should be concise with a clear call to action or requesting specific responses from members.

## Community composting is just the beginning

If a member of the compost caring team wishes, they can explore further developments. It's good to inquire with the members - what else do they need, what's missing in their vicinity, what challenges are they currently facing, or what interests them and what would they like to share with others? **You may discover additional topics and projects** that can be collectively advanced with some members.

**If the number of members decreases, and there aren't enough substitutes to fill the capacity of the compost chambers, it's advisable to actively approach neighbors** in the area (flyers, Facebook groups, each member reaches out to one known family in the vicinity, etc.).

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