GEORGIA MASTER COMPOSTER PROGRAM

A New Outreach Opportunity and Volunteer Source

Amanda Tedrow, Athens-Clarke County Cooperative Extension
Program Background

- Georgia residents showed an interested in learning more about composting.

- Community needs (presentations, classes) were more than could be covered by Extension and Solid Waste staff.

- Collected and reviewed program materials and handbooks from Master Composter programs in other states.
Who Participates?

- Citizens all across Georgia, whom:
  - enjoy working with people, digging in the dirt, and talking “trash”.
  - have time to attend classes & complete a class project.
  - can volunteer 40+ hours within the first year of completing the coursework, 20 hours each year thereafter

- Commercial composters, farmers, parents, college students, small enterprise
Program Format

- 20 student maximum in class
- Nine weekly classes, three hours each
  - Presentation/classroom format
- Two Saturday field trips visiting residential, farm and commercial composting facilities with hands-on activities
- Must attend seven of the nine weekly classes and give a final presentation to their classmates to graduate
What is provided to participants during the program:

- Georgia Master Composter Handbook
- Powerpoints for each presentation
- Vermicomposting bin
- Kitchen compost collector
- Trainee nametag
- During the last class:
  - Rodale book of Composting
  - Worms Eat My Garbage
  - Compost Thermometer
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic (s)</th>
<th>Reading assignment</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction: Why Compost? Basic Composting Guidelines: Recipe, Bin Types and Maintenance; Health and Safety issues for the composter</td>
<td>Chapter 1: Basic Composting; Chapter 10: Compost Health Hazards &amp; Safety</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>The chemistry of compost and other chemicals of the soil: pH, carbon, nitrogen, potassium, salts, calcium carbonate, nitrates, phosphorus; Local soils and weather and how that plays into composting: overview of Georgia soils and climate</td>
<td>Chapter 2: The Chemistry of Composting; Chapter 5: Georgia Soil and Climate</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Composting Microbiology: basics, soil organisms, human pathogens, thermophilic organisms, mycology; Fauna involved in composting: what will come, what does what to compost, pests vs. beneficial visitors, how to avoid the pests</td>
<td>Chapter 3: Composting Critters</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Uses of compost including Compost Tea/Extracts: how to use compost, storing, mulch, soil amendment, fertilizer and what is compost tea/extract, how to make tea/extract and how to use it</td>
<td>Chapter 6: Use of Compost; Chapter 8 Compost Tea</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Field Trip: Residential Recycling Bins (Dr Allard confirmed), Karen Whitten, David Hoescht</td>
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<td>Vermicomposting: types and number of worms, temperature, what to feed the worms, inside vs. outside bins</td>
<td>Chapter 4: Vermicomposting</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Compost problem solving, troubleshooting curing: curing, stinky pile, slimy pile, inactive pile, rodents, flies in the worm bin, dead worms, fire</td>
<td>Chapter 7: Finishing Compost &amp; Problem Solving; Chapter 9: How to select a Compost Method</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Beyond Traditional Composting: Bokashi; Compost Collections; Commercial Composting Success</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Field Trip: Commercial Recycling Operations - Classic City Compost (ACC Landfill) and Wilbros</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Tips on Teaching: know your audience, tools, test questions, preparation; Make and Takes: Vermi-Compost Bin Construction</td>
<td>Chapter 11: Tips on Teaching</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Project Presentations!</td>
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Project Presentations

- 6 minutes to present to classmates
- Topics are examples of what they have learned during class and will pass along to others or a creative composting project or display that they will be using during volunteering
- Classmates score presentations and provide feedback
Collaborating Instructors

- Amanda Tedrow, UGA Cooperative Extension
- Suki Janssen, Athens-Clarke County Recycling
- Julia Gaskin, UGA Crop and Soil Sciences, SSARE
- Dr. Paul Guillebeau, UGA CAES Extension Entomologist
- Dr. Elizabeth Little, UGA CAES Plant Pathology
- Mac Callahan, US Forest Service Research Ecologist
- Jason Governo, Compost Wizard LLC
Volunteer Requirement

- UGA screening application approval
- 40 hours of approved service in first year
  - 20 with program coordinators
  - 20 in other approved projects
- 20 hours each year thereafter to remain certified
- Hours must be turned in at end of calendar year, each year
Volunteer Opportunities

- Designing and creating composting display materials (banners, demo bins, supplies)
- International Compost Awareness Week Activities
  - Classes, tours, compost bin sales and builds
- School presentations
  - Building a worm bin, outdoor bin, etc.
- Adult presentations
  - Variety of topics: general composting, vermicomposting, hands-on programs, etc.
- Community Events
  - Farmers Market and other educational booths
- Community Garden consultations
2012 Program Community Impact

- 13 participants with 9 graduates over 400 hours volunteered
- Students reached over 500 individuals through:
  - Community/school demonstrations
  - Athens Farmers Market booth
  - ACC Water Festival booth
  - Composting station at 5-K race
  - Local composting businesses
  - Grant application through the UGA Office of Sustainability to creating on-campus composting program

2012 ACC Water Festival
2013 Master Composter program

- 20 participants, 13 graduating, 500 volunteered hours so far
- Program fees raised to $130
- Logo created
- Volunteer projects must be pre-approved for credit
- Additional volunteer opportunities added
- Two entrepreneurs in program
Volunteers in Action:
Volunteers in Action:
WIGGLE WORM

by Kasey Christian
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