

# Vancouver's Compost Demonstration Garden



Making Vancouver the World's Greenest City!



## **The 'Greenest' Garden in Vancouver !**

Since 1990, the City of Vancouver and City Farmer Society have been working together at the Vancouver Compost Demonstration Garden, to teach Vancouver residents how they can 'go green' at home. Composting is part of a larger City strategy named 'Grow Natural', which shows the public how to "save time, money and the environment by using natural yard care techniques."

The Vancouver Compost Garden works in cooperation with a variety of City Departments (Solid Waste, Water Design, Parks, Health, Streets, Green Streets) to inform the public about these strategies, which include back yard and worm composting, water conservation (rain barrels, drip irrigation, permeable surfaces) safe pest control and natural lawn care. All of these 'green' activities overlap and involve other topics as well.

For instance, compost can be used to produce organically grown food at home. Compost is also used as a mulch to conserve water. A green roof can hold rain water, preventing runoff during storms. Pest damage to lawns, such as our current European Chafer invasion, may involve advice about alternative ground covers, or a water-wise garden featuring BC native plants.

And residents of multi-family homes, who worm compost, will want to know about balcony and community gardens.

All of these activities improve the overall environment of our City. We are extremely lucky to have a garden as our 'living' office. The visiting public learn more when they can see, touch and smell what we show them, and the media have a beautiful backdrop for creating 'green' news stories.

Mike Harcourt secured our 2150 Maple Street location, for environmental education purposes, when he was Mayor of Vancouver in the early 1980's. Since that time, many thousands of people have passed through our gates and learned how to make Vancouver the "greenest city in the world".

In less than a year, we will welcome the world to our Garden as the City hosts the 2010 'Sustainable' Olympics. Visitors will see why Vancouver's Compost Demonstration Garden has helped make Vancouver the "the world's greenest city".

City Farmer has been a world leader in Urban Agriculture since 1978.



600 Vancouver residents joined our 'wormshops' at the Compost Garden in 2008.





City Farmer and the City of Vancouver run the largest municipal worm bin distribution program in the world!





City Farmer works with the City to promote backyard composting. Presently, 45% of single family properties in the City have a bin.





We experiment with other types of waste recycling. A home-made dog waste composter (left). A compost toilet made in Canada (right).





For over 25 years, food has been grown using organic methods at the Vancouver Compost Garden.





'Hands on' learning takes place every day of the week at the Vancouver Compost Garden.





# Waterwise Gardening

*Water supply is limited during the summer months so use water wisely!*

## Conserve water

- mix in compost to help hold soil moisture
- water during the coolest part of the day and direct water to the roots

## Plan ahead

- choose drought-resistant plants
- group together plants with similar water and light requirements

Use mulch to slow evaporation

Water slowly to allow for deep penetration

Shade Partial Sun Full Sun



The City of Vancouver's rain barrel is one part of a larger water conservation strategy at the Compost Garden.





People from around the world visit us and take home 'green' ideas to use in their countries.





Tours take place every day of the year at the City's Compost Demonstration Garden. Students (left). Mayors from China (right).





One of the City's three green 'permeable' lanes leads to the Vancouver Compost Garden.





City Farmer is often recognized for its public service work.



# Natural Lawn Care

*Maintain a beautiful lawn without chemicals*

## *Water only as needed*

- 1 hour once a week (2.5 cm depth)

## *Mow tall once a week or more*

## *Keep the soil healthy*

- leave the clippings on the soil
- use natural or slow-release fertilizers in September
- quick-release fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides pollute waterways and harm beneficial soil creatures



Hand pull weeds



Aerate an overseed compacted soil

## *Nurture your lawn ecosystem*



Greater Vancouver Regional District

\* Information on Natural Lawn Care contact the GVRD 604 436-6803.



We show visitors how to maintain a natural lawn, and also, how to install alternative ground covers to help deal with the European Chafer .





We teach raised bed and container gardening to people with disabilities.





The organic vegetables, herbs, and fruit we grow, go to a local hospice.





Green buildings. Our cob tool shed is made from clay, sand and straw.





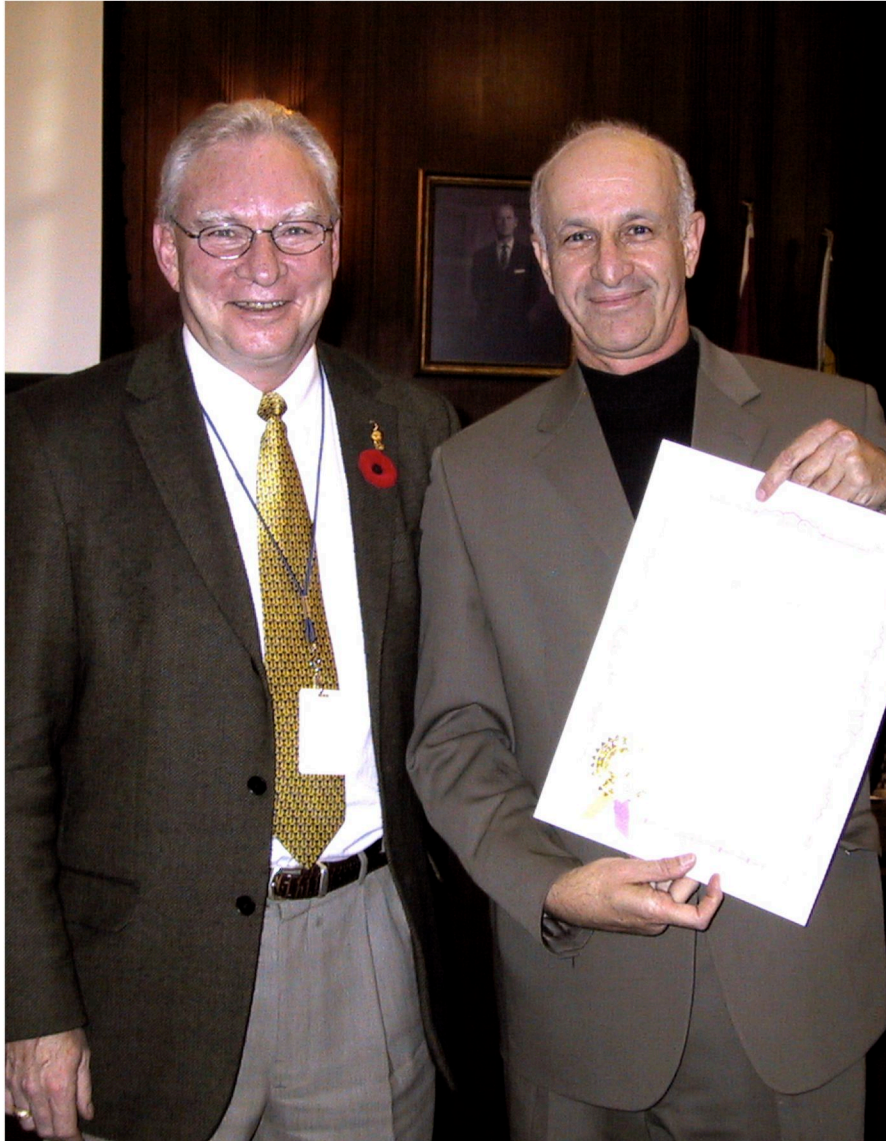
Our Water-Wise Garden features BC native plants, which thrive in wet winters and dry summers.





We demonstrate many useful technologies. (clockwise) Wall garden, indoor aeroponics kit, keyhole garden with compost digester, cold frame .





Mayor Larry Campbell proclaims "City Farmer Month" in 2003.





Maria shows off our Shiitake mushrooms, which are growing on a Vancouver oak log. Vikram Vij listens to Compost Garden staff.



**From Meeru Dhalwala, wife of Vikram  
Vij of Vij's Restaurant**

December 17, 2008 – Email to VanGrow Garden Club members.

I've received so many emails from VanGrow members regarding our trip to City Farmer (Vancouver's Compost Garden) to learn about growing mushrooms, that I thought I'd send you all a quick response. There were about 10 of us and the 2 hour workshop was the equivalent of watching a totally gripping and engaging movie that was also smart and resulted in interesting conversations afterwards.

Vikram and I have finally found an activity that we can do together, and one that is outside of our joined at the hip restaurant careers. City Farmer gave us lots of ideas in terms of a green design for our future Vij's on Cambie street as well. We've asked our designer to make an appointment with Michael Levenston (Director) sometime in the Spring.

In addition to growing mushrooms, Marie (the compost, bugs, and mushroom specialist) and Michael also answered lots of our other gardening questions.

They've got so many cool gardening projects that could so easily be done in our own homes such as rat proof compost containers, mesculin greens/ herbs winter boxes with skylights, family dog poop composting (seriously, and not gross), mushroom spores in oak logs, an outdoor mud/clay oven much like the real tandoor in India and not the fake aluminum electric ones everyone uses now.

These are just things off the top of my head. Our trip was so great that I've asked Michael and Maria if they could schedule another such workshop for VanGrow members who work Monday- Friday. This would be on a Saturday morning.





Our green roof can store significant volumes of rainwater, preventing runoff during storms.





Vancouver has banned cosmetic pesticide use. We teach alternative pest management.





Hundreds of media events take place at the garden. Millions of people hear our message.





The Compost Hotline reaches people by phone. We speak to thousands more at outreach events.





A tour of the Compost Garden includes a visit to four community gardens right next to us on Maple Street.



# Compost Hotline News

Published by City Farmer : Canada's Office of Urban Agriculture May 2008



Mandarin-speaking video star – "Hong".



Punjabi-speaking video star – "Preet".

## Compost "How To" Videos in Mandarin, Cantonese and Punjabi

The City of Vancouver will be running 27 newspaper advertisements in the small, local papers, including the Chinese and East Indian papers. The ads will run from May 3 to June 28th.

This year, the ads in the Chinese and Punjabi newspapers refer people to City Farmer web pages that have videos in Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin) and Punjabi. Below the videos on the web page are links to translated text materials about how to purchase, assemble and use a backyard composter.

<http://cityfarmer.org/composting.html>

<http://cityfarmer.org/composting1.html>



Cantonese-speaking video star – "Patrick".

The Compost Hotline 604.736-2250 is funded by the City of Vancouver and Metro Vancouver

## City Farmer News

New Stories From 'Urban Agriculture Notes'



### NAVIGATION

[Home](#)

[About](#)

[Contact](#)

## City Farmer's Farhat Khan Teaches Worm Composting

Linked by Michael Levenston

### SEARCH THIS SITE

To search, type and hit enter

### CATEGORIES

[Africa](#)  
[Aquaculture](#)  
[Articles](#)  
[Asia](#)  
[Australia](#)  
[Bees](#)  
[Book](#)  
[Brazil](#)  
[Bugs](#)  
[Canada](#)  
[Cartoon](#)  
[Children](#)  
[China](#)



Photo by Michael Levenston

**The City of Vancouver and City Farmer have provided worm bins to City residents since 1991.**

### LATEST ENTRIES

Vitalizing the Vacant: The Logistics and Benefits of Middle- to Large-Scale Agricultural Production in Urban Land

Vancouver City Hall beats White House to the green

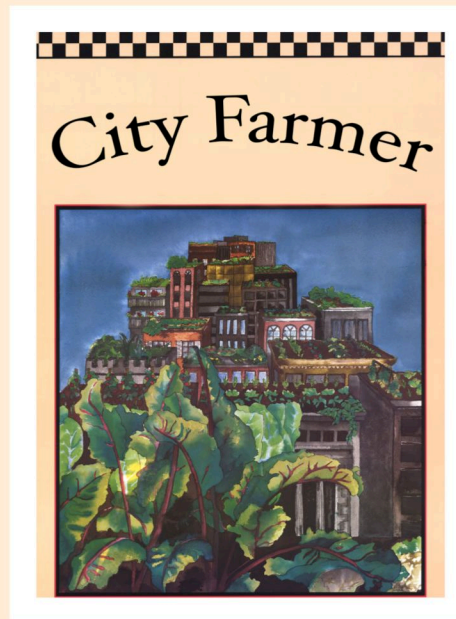
We also publish a newsletter, web site and videos at the Vancouver Compost Garden.





These children will make Vancouver the "world's greenest city".





The City of Vancouver's Compost Demonstration Garden

2150 Maple Street  
Compost Hotline 604.736.2250  
[www.cityfarmer.info](http://www.cityfarmer.info)