

Myths on Composting

Composting is nature's process of recycling decomposed organic materials into a rich soil known as compost. Anything that was once a living organism will decompose. Basically, composting is an acceleration of the same process nature uses.

In order to assist in improving waste management across the Maltese Islands, Wasteserv Malta[®] is introducing the organic waste collection. This free kit will include a ventilated, green bin together with specially designed organic bags. The objectives behind this project include reducing the amount of non-organic waste which is being currently put in black bags, make better use of landfill availability and considerably reducing greenhouse gas emissions to increase renewable energy generation. A pilot project taking place, where certain families were given this free kit and guidelines on what to put in the Organic bin.

As shown in the above-mentioned paragraphs, compost is very important since it is beneficial to the environment. However, there are a number of misconceptions which are discouraging people from composting. A questionnaire was carried out in order to view people's view towards composting. 55 participants took part in this exercise.

32 participants said that composting is not complicated and time-consuming; 10 individuals agreed with the question whilst the remaining 13 were not sure about it. In actual fact, this myth is debunked since composting only requires a couple of minutes every day to ensure that good quality compost is obtained at our homes. This is because composting is a natural process and is pretty low maintenance.

After being asked whether composting would result in the production of a bad smell and pungent odours, 44% of the individuals were not sure with only 3.6% declared that composting causes smells which are intolerable whatsoever. In fact, malodorous composts are obtained only if the compost itself is not mixed on a routine basis or if a lot of nitrogen-based



components such as leaves and grass are included; a problem which can be easily resolved by adding carbon-based constituents such as used paper, newspapers and cardboard.

The process of composting attracts rodents, insects and other unwanted pests such as cockroaches'. 23 individuals agreed with the statement, 16 disagreed and another 16 participants were not sure. In reality, composting would only attract the aforementioned mammals and insects if there is standing water on it, if the compost is not mixed regularly to circulate air and if certain foods are put in the compost bin such as meat, bones and dairy. If the necessary precautions are used, these pests are not attracted. Guidelines issued by the Maltese pilot project of the Organic Bin included some of these food as things that can be composed. Thus, keeping in mind the high temperatures in Malta, especially during the summer period, a revision of such list must be done until the whole project is introduced around Malta and Gozo.

46 individuals disagreed and expressed their collective opinion that composting is not expensive, only 1 person agreed that the process costs good money whereas 8 people were unsure. Anyone can take the initiative of buying a cheap bin for their own home, or even compost in a small patch of soil of their own garden.

Some individuals think that people who live in the city cannot compost at home since a lot of land is required in order to do proper composting. Yet, 12 participants agreed with the statement but 43 said that the statement is false whilst also justifying their answer by saying that only a small bin / area is required to carry out composting.



In conclusion, based on the questionnaire's responses, one can easily notice that although the majority of people have an overall good idea about composting, there are still a significant amount of individuals who are not educated enough about this matter; especially about the false myths that surround the process of composting. Thus, ideally, further nation-wide campaigns should be carried out on local media together with increasing the awareness about composting through Wasteserv® Organic Bin project.