

Composting: Nature's Way to Recycle



Union urban development ministry has launched a *"Compost Banao Compost Apnao"* campaign to encourage people to segregate waste and get into the habit of composting. This campaign will give further impetus to the Swachh Bharat Campaign.

Alappuzha in Kerala is a "waste smart" city according to recent assessment by a Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) team. Reason? It has managed to achieve 100% waste segregation in 12 of the city's 23 wards. It doesn't landfill, instead a majority of the households have biogas plants and composting systems. But as per the Centre's recent Swachh Survekshan survey 2017, Alappuzha ranks at 380. The top three "cleanest" cities according to the Swachh survey—Indore, Bhopal and Visakhapatnam, have a centralized system of waste management.

According to the senior official at the Swachh Bharat Mission Directorate, "most cities were not moving towards decentralized waste management which is why they didn't consider it as a parameter. It's not very well regulated in cities. But now they have decided that segregation and management of waste at source needs to be given weightage. In mega cities, composting or recycling is not an option yet" If it happens then it will reduce 20% burden on the civic body in terms of garbage collection. Moreover, they may use the compost or sell it to others.

To start the composting plant, just three plastic bins with holes for aeration, 70% coco-peat, 10% microbes and 20% old compost are needed. One can use vegetable waste, leftover food and other wet waste to make compost. These compost pits can be put up nearby housing societies and vacant places. The green waste that is generated in kitchens can be put up daily with little amount of water for composting. Readymade kits to make compost at home costing around Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 4,000 initially are also available. But if you are willing to prepare the kit yourself, the cost can reduce to less than half. The recurring expenditure is around Rs. 100 to 150 per month. Such arrangement needs very less space and can be kept in a corner of the flat's balcony or terrace, and if one follows the correct procedure, no foul smell is generated. In bigger societies, mostly iron net pits used are of 6 feet long,

and 2.5 feet tall dimension. The vermi compost processing system which takes around one to two months to complete a cycle before a fresh load of waste can be put in. The wet waste is used for composting, whereas the dry waste is recycled. This helps to keep the city clean and the compost used will boost plant life and greenery.

Composting Stories across Indian Mega-Cities:

Gurgaon gets two new composting plants to make fertilizers from waste

The new composting plants will turn wet waste into fertilizer and also take the load off the city only solid waste treatment plant at Bandhwari. The waste coming from the nearby houses will be segregated into kitchen waste and solid waste. This would take the load off the city's main solid waste treatment plant by the reducing the volume of garbage that it draws every day.

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) which will stop collection of wet waste from bulk generators

Residential apartments with 20 units or more and commercial complexes-- has decided to incentivize the scheme of self-composting. BBMP intends to give partial relief under garbage cess collection for bulk generators, and increase allocation for awareness schemes of how to compost wet waste. BBMP is already hosting several composting melas across the city, with simple techniques that can be adopted by citizens to compost wet waste.

In Mumbai this society has been treating around 250 kg of wet waste every month

In April'17, the residents of a housing society in Sion uncovered the first batch of manure they made from their kitchen and garden wastes. Since February'17, the residents of Kalpataru Harmony Housing Society have adopted the practice of converting their decomposable garbage into compost and keeping aside dry waste (plastic, glass and other recyclable items) and electronic waste (E-waste), leaving only 10% at their garbage at the gates to be picked up by municipal workers, who dump them at a landfill. The society has been treating around 250 kg of wet waste every month since then and got their first batch of compost only last month. The project has cost them Rs 1.5 lakh. RUR Greenlife Pvt Ltd, a solid waste management enterprise, help them set up the bins and understand the composting process. The residents now know the process backwards.

When people in a society become eco-conscious and go the extra mile for environment, we can do wonders to protect our planet. Kalpataru Harmony is one such role model where residents have championed the art of composting paving the way for many Mumbai societies to follow. Other recyclable wastes, including plastic, paper, metal and e-waste, are stored in the society and handed over to a recycler every month.

Composting projects in societies have led to rise in women entrepreneurship. For example the Pratigya Mahila Bhachat Gath, a self-help group, has more than 140 women members performing various activities. They collect waste from households, segregate it and then put the uncooked wet waste in the composting pits. They have been composting for the last two years, and now wants the civic body to allot them a bigger space.

The initiative of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to segregate dry and wet waste, and use uncooked wet waste for composting with help of self-groups has brought positive result. Not only new self-help groups are joining the initiative, existing groups are also seeking more space for composting. With more women working on composting, the amount of waste that is taken to dumping grounds can reduce significantly.

Application of Smart Solutions

Five environment conscious citizens of Pimpri Chinchwad in Pune have formed two Whatsapp groups for guiding people in this regard. You can now learn to convert your household waste to prepare compost for an organic kitchen garden on WhatsApp. The group consists of enthusiasts who have been preparing compost from wet household waste in their homes for around two years and now they want to guide environment conscious citizens. This was certainly a much-needed move!

Sources:

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/environment/pollution/how-swachh-bharat-survey-may-have-penalised-clean-cities/articleshow/58870420.cms>

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/after-recycling-waste-harvesting-rainwater-mumbai-society-wants-to-install-solar-panels/story-eyTHX34Zi1UEDIKfa6FGdO.html>

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/612368/palike-reward-composting-wet-waste.html>

<https://www.greenmylife.in>