



Sarah - Composting made easy for the community

What was your goal and what did you achieve?

For my project I wanted to encourage people in my local area to compost or to re-use their food waste, food scraps, because I'm originally from a small town and we never put food scraps in the bin, we always gave them to the chickens or the dog, so we never wasted much. But when I moved to the city, they put it into landfill and I found that disgusting, I thought 'how could you do that!', they kept wasting the foods so I thought that I need to fix this because it's wrong.

So I sent out a survey by letterbox to my local community but I didn't get many back. The only ones I got back were from people who do compost or do use the green waste bin, so that wasn't very encouraging. My original idea was to do a communal compost bin in the area because there's a lot of good spots to put one or to run a workshop to show people how to compost, but for one of the questions I put in my survey 'What would work best for you?', they all said "a flyer in the mail." So that was really discouraging, I didn't have any motivation to make a flyer, I wanted to do something more hands on. But I did, I made a flyer and I hope to send them out next week, then I'll survey them again and send out more and see if it's made a difference. I've had them professionally printed on good paper but they haven't arrived yet. It's a double-sided A5 flyer.

Who did you work with?

Originally I sent the survey out to a couple of streets in my area but I didn't get very many back, so I got hold of the church garden group to see what they could do. They all answered my survey, and a lot of them wanted to know how the results went, or what they can do better. For their surveys they all did compost or used the green waste bin, so that was really good and now they know I'm interested in it and they want to do more, so hopefully next year I'll be able to do more with them and use their contacts to spread the word.

How did you promote your survey?

It's really hard with our school because we have a lot of teachers and a lot of students, and in the YEC we have plenty of other students who are from our school. So I didn't want to intrude and overload them. So I stuck to my local community which was a lot easier, and I worked a lot by myself because it wasn't really much, but the lady I board with, because I'm not from the city, she was really helpful, she talked to the neighbours about it, and my neighbour keeps asking me about it all of the time – he's really interested. So that was really good.

Biggest success?

My biggest success would be when I first got to my boarding house they threw it (*food scraps*)

in the landfill but now we are composting, and a couple of weeks ago we were able to use the compost on the veggie garden so that was big win. Even just in our house we were able to change, and now even my board-mum knows how to do it and she knows what goes in, and she tells all her friends as well what she's doing so that's good.

Next steps?

Hopefully it will continue and I will definitely see what my flyer does, whether it encourages people to. But next year I'd like to do a little bit broader and maybe include the garden group and see what other people do, I really want to know what other people do because it's really hard in the city I know, not to waste, because it's so much easier to chuck it out, you just put it in the bin and that's it, that's the last you see of it, so especially people who live in apartments, it will be interesting to see what they do. I was encouraging people to use their kerbside green bins. I've got some info here about if you don't think you have enough for a compost bin – Mitcham Council sell compostable bags you can put into your green bin and it goes to a commercial mulch place, and they've got kitchen caddies and special deals if you ask for them, so there's a range of options.

Your advice to other students?

Definitely don't get discouraged if no one else is interested, if you're interested keep going and you'll eventually wear them down. Go with lots of options, don't limit yourself. I limited myself – I really wanted to do a communal compost bin – and when they said they didn't want to use it I was really disheartened. So keep your options open and listen to your audience.

What did you enjoy most?

Getting to know the people in my local area, when I'm walking around they ask me about it now, because I'm new to the area, this is my first year there so it's definitely about getting to know my neighbours and what they did, so that was good.

This case study was transcribed from an interview. These are Sarah's words and opinions.

