COMPOST YOUR JACK-O'-LANTERNs AFTER HALLOWEEN

If one-quarter of the houses in Metro Vancouver carve a pumpkin this Halloween, we'll have about 200,000 used pumpkins.

That’s a big pile of pumpkins we shouldn’t trash. About 1,000 tonnes of pumpkins.

This year, for the first time, all municipalities in the region are allowing residents to put Halloween jack-o'-lanterns into the green waste carts used for yard trimmings.

“Enjoy your Halloween but please don’t put Jack in the trash,” said Greg Moore, the Chair of Metro Vancouver’s Waste Management Committee. “Composting food waste is one of the easy things we can do to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Join others in your community who are working to reduce the effects of climate change. You can make a difference.”

Food scraps and yard trimmings accounted for about 40 per cent of the waste in residential garbage last year.

As these organic materials degrade in a landfill, they generate a powerful greenhouse gas that hastens climate change. That greenhouse gas is methane, which traps about 20 times more heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide. Methane and other greenhouse gases are building up in the atmosphere, thickening the heat-trapping blanket of insulation around the Earth.

Backyard composting is one of the simple things individuals can do to keep food scraps out of landfills and reduce emissions of methane. In some Metro Vancouver municipalities, up to 60 per cent of the households already use a backyard composter.

Seven municipalities now allow residents of single-family homes to add other food scraps to the yard clippings cart: Burnaby, Coquitlam, New Westminster, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Richmond and Vancouver.

By the end of 2011, most communities in the region are expected to have a food scraps collection program.

Note to news media:
Broadcast-quality video of food waste at Metro Vancouver’s garbage transfer station in Surrey is available for downloading.
October 25, 2010

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All too often, pumpkins are bagged, tossed and carted off to the landfill. Here are some ways to keep jack-o'-lanterns out of the trash:

Jack has Curb Appeal

This year, for the first time, all municipalities in the region are allowing residents to put Halloween jack-o'-lanterns into the green waste carts used for yard trimmings. Seven municipalities encourage food scraps to be added to yard trimming carts put out at the curb. Curbside collection of food is available in single-family residential areas of Burnaby, Coquitlam, New Westminster, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Richmond and Vancouver. Please do not put plastic bags – or bags that look like plastic and are marketed as a “biodegradeable” bag - into the carts used for yard trimmings and food scraps. Check your municipality’s garbage and recycling web pages for more information and good recycling opportunities in your community.

Eat Jack

Pumpkins are not only edible but good for you since they are high in fibre and antioxidants. Search ‘pumpkin’ at www.epicurious.com or visit www.pumpkinnook.com/cookbook.htm for recipes. Roasted pumpkin seeds are nutritious and make a great snack.

Put Jack in the Box

Chop Jack into thumb-sized pieces and put the pieces into a backyard composter. Or put pieces of pumpkin in a vermicompost bin - a kitchen-based worm bin. The worms will thank you. And you will get nutrient-rich compost that you can use to grow next year’s pumpkin.

Return Jack to his Roots

Dig a shallow trench in your vegetable or flower garden and place chopped pieces of Jack throughout. Fill in the trench and let him rest in peace.
For more information please contact the Information Centre at 604-432-6200.