



PW-20

Master composters encourage reuse and recycling

The Mojave Desert and Mountain Integrated Waste Joint Powers Authority (JPA) in California has recruited more than 600 citizens to become master composters. These individuals receive free training in composting methods and, in return, volunteer their time to help educate their neighbors about composting at home and recycling.

Implementation notes

Leadership/staffing The program is administered by a master composter who works closely with groups of master composters in the jurisdictions that belong to the JPA: Big Bear Lake (5,000), Barstow (21,000), Apple Valley (54,000), Victorville (64,000), Twentynine Palms (15,000), Yucca Valley (17,000), and the unincorporated sections of San Bernardino County (1,709,000).

Timeline The JPA was formed in 1991 to enhance the ability of member communities to manage waste. The master composter program began in 2000.

Budget/funding All of the member communities contribute financially to the JPA. The master composter program is supported by JPA funds.

Program description Volunteers receive eight hours of free training through the University of California Cooperative Extension, San Bernardino County; they learn composting methods, grass mulching, vermi-composting (using worms), mountain gardening, and other green waste-management techniques for homeowners. Training materials and course content are developed by the JPA and the cooperative extension. Training sessions are offered in various locations throughout the county, and class size ranges from 10 to 60 students. Instructors include representatives of the cooperative extension master gardener/master composter

Diana McKeen
Community Services Manager

Town of Apple Valley
14955 Dale Evans Parkway
Apple Valley, CA 92307

760/240-7521
Fax: 760/240-7399

E-mail:
dmckeen@applevalley.org
Web site: www.urecycle.org





program, a landscape maintenance company, the resource conservation district, and worm farmers. Classes are free for residents of JPA member communities and unincorporated county areas. Those who complete the class receive certification as master composters.

In exchange for this free training, participants are asked to spend at least 50 hours over the next two years helping the JPA educate their communities about composting and recycling. Many master composters are contributing many more hours through composting presentations at schools, garden clubs, and community groups; individual assistance to residents and companies wanting to start composting; information booths at stores and home and garden shows; beverage container recycling programs; and adopt-a-highway programs. Master composters in each community meet once a month to plan activities. All of the county's master composters get together on occasion for joint projects.

Results The more than 600 master composters (and the number is growing quickly) have become recycling ambassadors to their communities. Many have developed close ties with city personnel and extend the reach of city staff. Several of the master composters now compost virtually everything that comes out of their kitchens.

