

Taking up Composting Challenge reaps rewards for local family



Kareena Boodoosingh isn't afraid to get her hands dirty. In fact, when the opportunity came to do just that, she was 'ecstatic' to dig in.

An ad in the Town of Aurora's Notice Board caught the eye of the Grade 7 student from Northern Lights Public School. It signalled the beginning of the Greener Gardens Challenge, a joint venture between the Town and the Region of York on a new backyard composting program bringing together volunteer households to participate in a pilot program to see if they can reduce the amount of material they put curbside in their green bins.

The simple challenge was for households to reduce their green bin waste by 50 per cent through the free distribution of backyard composters, targeting a 50 per cent reduction while producing 'rich, organic soil for household use in the process.'

It was estimated a reduction of green waste could save Aurora up to \$100,000 in annual costs and Kareena and her father, Ainsley, were happy to do their part. In fact, they were one of the very first households to take up the challenge, ultimately becoming one of ten finalists in the experiment.

'I really wanted to try composting because I hadn't done it before and I thought it would be a nice, new opportunity to try,' says Kareena. 'I have always had a big interest in environmental stuff, saving the environment and going green. We want to save the earth and we want to keep it safe for those who are going to come after us. The world deserves to be happy.'

The Boodoosingh Family are new to Canada, moving here from Trinidad in 2008. Self-described 'newbies', they came from an island nation where some environmental issues are done well, while others, particularly in the area of recycling, 'are really behind the curve.' But, coming from the Caribbean might have given them a slight leg-up on their composting game.

'Where we come from composting with piles of leaves and twigs out on the land was kind of normal,' says Ainsley. 'This was a little more of a formal, structured way of doing it. It meant separating the green bin contents a little more diligently because you can't put meat and bones into it but from a success point of view, our green bin waste over the summer until now has probably dropped by about half. With a little bit more effort, we can probably knock off about two thirds of what goes out to the street.'

From his perspective, the success of Greener Gardens challenge programs and backyard composters speaks for itself. While some aspects of it were a bit labour intensive, including regularly turning the composting waste within the drum and making sure it is well-watered to prevent intense odours during the hot summer months, it is rewarding and worthwhile.

'There was a little bit of an icky factor when it is warm'and it is probably not for everyone as there is a bit of routine, but for anyone

who likes being outdoors, it is nice to see a natural cycle happening in front of you,? says Ainsley. ?I really hope the Town continues with these sorts of initiatives. This was great and maybe there are other things along the green route they can experiment with. I hope it translates into change in educating first before they can elicit some sorts of change. It would be great to see this being a feature in the Town to reduce waste. Whatever they can do to help people recycle can go a long way.?