

# Organic Land Care *with*

SOUL Member Newsletter Spring 2018



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## SOUL News

**The Canadian Society for Organic Urban Land Care** has officially been registered as a Canadian not-for-profit organization however, we will still be known as SOUL. Our society by-laws have also been updated and will be available on our [website](#) shortly. Visit our [website](#) for more information on the transition.

**New Contact Info** If you've emailed us lately, you may have realized we didn't receive it. We had domain issues which affected our email and

resulted in some minor changes. Our Executive Director, Sundaura, can now be reached at [executivedirector@organiclandcare.ca](mailto:executivedirector@organiclandcare.ca); our Administrator, Julia, at [admin@organiclandcare.ca](mailto:admin@organiclandcare.ca). Our website remains [organiclandcare.org](http://organiclandcare.org) but will be moved to [organiclandcare.ca](http://organiclandcare.ca) in the coming months. We apologize for any trouble you've had getting in touch with us.

**Organic Land Care for Your Community** A draft copy of the new *Organic Land Care for Your Community* guide is now available. This was developed for the public to use as a road map for working with their municipal government to adopt organic land care policies on public lands.

As this is a draft, we appreciate your feedback and encourage you to share it with anyone in your network that may find it useful. Our next step is to compile supporting information and resources. If you have a go-to place for technical information, articles or case studies relating to organic land care in public spaces, please let us know via [email](#), [Facebook](#), or commenting on our [blog post](#).

## Congratulations to our newest Accredited Practitioners

Chris Avison (Matheson, ON)  
Catalina Polloni (Penticton, BC)

**New Certificates and Membership Cards** New certificates are currently being printed and should arrive in your mailbox in the coming weeks. Going forward, certificates will only be sent to new professional members. Membership cards are always available to print from our website and will be updated annually with your renewal. As always, Professional Members' names are listed on our [website](#).

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**Death by Compost** Accredited Practitioner, Laurie Balch learned the downsides of composting the hard way. Compost is a great addition to your garden, but be wary of the source of materials and whether or not it's finished. Read Laurie's full article [here](#). Thanks to Laurie for sharing her experience!

Do you have a gardening experience to share? Tell us about it!

[Facebook](#) [Email](#)

## What about Compost?

“... in indigenous ways of knowing, we understand a thing only when we understand it with all four aspects of our being: mind, body, emotion, and spirit.” (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 47).

Simply put, compost happens, so I can now finish this short exploration into compost, decomposition and transmutation (“Black Gold”) – truly alchemy if ever there was. Because we, the readers have been cultured, schooled and involved in “Working With Nature”, my assumption is that the activity and process of composting is familiar to all of you.

Its been my good fortune to be involved in composting for a long time -both here in B.C. and in the Yukon, where I experienced the best and worst of compost (that is another article on compost bins going rogue and the story of flies!). My initial experience with compost revealed an increase to the nutrients that supported growth of plants. As I explored the world of micro-organisms (bacteria, fungi, protozoa, nematodes and micro-arthropods) and macro-organisms (earthworms, arthropods), I began to understand how organisms drive the decomposition process. Furthermore, in mature compost the microorganisms continue to digest organic material, providing an ongoing supply of nutrients to plants through the “Soil Food Web” distribution system. Composts built with a diversity of materials, with attention to the Carbon/Nitrogen ratios, determination of whether to use a hot or cold composting process, aeration and increased moisture produces well broken down compost. When one composts, it is good to replicate a natural process.

The composting process is improved through the utilization of technology (e.g. bin structures) mechanization (e.g. aeration and irrigation) or a combination of both. Exploration of ways to enhance the compost include: addition of Effective or Indigenous Micro-organisms, use of a fermentation process called Bokhasi composting, addition of Biochar to increase the speed of decomposition, reduction of GHG emissions and to “charge” the Biochar, and use of composting methods from other geographies (e.g. utilizing Hugelkultur composting). However, current literature supports what has been known; aerobic composting uses a hot process whereas a cold process is slower. Good compost making will produce good compost.

The wisdom introduced by botanist and Potawatomi Indigenous knowledge keeper Robin Kimmerer says, we understand something when we know it through our mind, body, emotion and spirit. This reflects something I/we have always known, but now science backs up this knowledge. The microscopic world (microbiology), to my mind, may be where the developments in composting are heading. Two recent pieces of research point in this direction. I know good compost by smelling it, although tests will reveal what precisely is in it. *Continued on next page...*

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A pleasant earthy smell means good compost. This smell is called geosmin; it is the Actinobacter (a filamentous fungi like bacteria previously called Actinomycetes), and its presence denotes good compost. (Paul, 2017). Furthermore, I feel good when I am working with good finished compost, although I feel great anytime I am in the garden! Although the smell is pleasant, there is also something else promoting my good feelings. Research has found that the soil bacteria *Mycobacterium vaccae* is at play here. This bacteria when inhaled or enters the body elsewhere, it appears to activate neurons in the brain that release serotonin which positively affects one's mood. (Schlanger, Z., 2007). Dirt has been labelled as the new prozac, now referred to as an antidepressant.

Compost is good for the soil, good for plants and now we find it is good for us! As has been said, we start with the soil and everything will follow!

“Nothing ever grows from the heavens downwards; everything grows from the earth upwards to the heavens. We are all part of nature ...” (Stiene, 2015, p. 23).

## References

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*David wrote this article from his home on the unceded and occupied Coast Salish territories, specifically, the ancestral lands of the Lekwungen speaking peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, the lands of the WSÁNEĆ First Nation and the T'Souke First Nation.*



*Photo submitted by: Sundaura Alford-Purvis*