

## COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT TURNS FOOD SCRAPS INTO BLACK GOLD

Montpelier--When gardeners return to The Garden at 485 Elm in Montpelier next spring, they'll have a ready supply of "black gold" for their gardens.

That's thanks to a project dubbed Compostville that was completed this past summer by site co-coordinator Hannah Morris and other volunteers. Morris, a Montpelier resident, created a new compost system that will allow the gardeners to turn food scraps, leaves and other organic matter into nutrient-rich compost for the collaboratively grown community garden.

"Organizing Compostville came about in a fairly logical progression," Morris explains. "I took the University of Vermont Extension Master Composter course in October 2015 and also attended the NOFA-VT winter conference where I took part in a workshop about composting at schools. With this knowledge, I entered this past growing season more heavily involved in the leadership and organizational side of the community garden."

Morris, who also is a certified Extension Master Gardener, was one of 64 Vermonters who completed the Extension Master Composter course this year along with the required volunteer hours to become a certified Master Composter. The course, which teaches the basics of backyard composting, is offered annually by the UVM Extension Master Gardener program with funding from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation.

"Graduates have the option of completing a 20-hour volunteer internship to earn certification as an Extension Master Composter," notes Extension Master Gardener Program Coordinator Beret Halverson. "Many have worked with local solid waste management districts, schools and other community groups to teach people about composting and help their communities find composting solutions as we move closer to the implementation of Act 148, Vermont's new universal recycling and composting law, in July 2017."

To fulfill her volunteer requirement, Morris researched plans for a three-bin compost system online. At the time, the garden had one large bin, essentially a pile that was unwieldy to turn over since it was so large. And there was no place to turn it to facilitate the breakdown of organic matter into compost.

"After gathering information and pricing out materials, I ran the budget by Chris Adams and Sheryl Rapee-Adams, our garden managers who own the land and materials where the garden is located. They approved it all.

"When spring rolled around, I ordered the materials. During a community garden work party, several of us worked together to build it. And thus began Compostville."

The Garden at 485 Elm, which includes a 1/4-acre vegetable garden along with herb and pollinator gardens, is a teaching garden organized by Extension Master Gardeners in partnership with the Vermont Community Garden Network. It was started in 2014 as a community garden to grow food collaboratively for the participating gardeners and to donate to local churches and non-profit organizations in central Vermont.

To learn more, visit [www.thegardenat485elm.org](http://www.thegardenat485elm.org). For information on the Master Composter and Master Gardener programs, go to <http://www.uvm.edu/mastergardener> or call (802) 656-9562.