



## YMCA at Virginia Tech Grant Application Letter

# Community Garden Vermicomposting

### Project Background

- In 2007, the Y was approached by Arlene Lambert about developing a 15-acre parcel on the North end of town to be permanent community garden space. In 2008, we began the permitting process, began work on the Y Solar Greenhouse, and are raising funds to begin implementing this program in stages.

Phase I of the development involves the installation 40 raised beds in an area that will have composting, community space, and raised bed gardening. **As part of this first phase, we would like to install a vermicomposting site that will provide worms and compost for the raised beds, for future gardening areas, and as an income source for the Y (worm sales) to help make the gardens financially self sustaining.**

The Gardens are envisioned to be community space that invites and encourages interaction between diverse groups, environmental education, sustainable development practices, and community building. With space assigned for individual activities, group activities, and community areas, we intend for the Hale-YMCA Gardens to be the outdoor equivalent of the Y Center – a place for community.

### Project Details

- This grant is specifically to install vermicomposting at the Gardens.

Vermicompost is richer in many nutrients than compost produced by other composting methods. It is also rich in microbial life which helps break down nutrients already present in the soil into plant-available forms. Unlike other compost, worm castings also contain worm mucus which keeps nutrients from washing away with the first watering and holds moisture better than plain soil. For this reason, some fruit and seed pits are reported to germinate in vermicompost easily. Vermicompost benefits soil by

- improving its physical structure;
- enriching soil in micro-organisms, adding plant hormones such as auxins and gibberellic acid, and adding enzymes such as phosphatase and cellulase;
- attracting deep-burrowing earthworms already present in the soil;
- improving water holding capacity;
- enhancing germination, plant growth, and crop yield; and
- improving root growth and structure.

This grant would allow the Y to purchase two Worm Towers and 20,000 starter worms. The Y has identified a good site for the towers where the worms will be protected, but receive good sunlight.

Within 1 year, the Y will have enough worms to start new worm towers, as needed, and also to sell worms to fellow gardeners and fishermen.

### Participants and Beneficiaries

- The beneficiaries of a vermicomposting will be:

- Gardeners who use the Hale-YMCA gardens
- Community gardeners who can share in the compost.
- Community gardeners and fisherman who are in need of worms.
- School children visiting the greenhouse and gardens.
- The participants of a vermicomposting would be:
  - Student and community volunteers to help install and maintain the vermicomposting

**Itemized Budget:**

- Garden budget for gardens on back, front, and side:
 

○ 20,000 Worms	\$360.00
○ 2 – 3-Tray Worm Towers	\$250.00
○ Misc.	\$ 50.00
○ Starter Compost	\$ 0 – provided by YMCA
○ Upkeep	\$ 0 – provided by YMCA volunteers
▪ <b><u>TOTAL Request</u></b>	<b><u>\$750</u></b>
  
- The Y has just begun raising funds for the new Gardens. The donation of the land (15 acres) was a tremendous starting point and the greenhouse is currently 80% funded by private donations. The Community Foundation provided seed money to begin our new raised bed area this spring.

**Contact Information:**

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**Attachments:** Garden Overview and e.e. cummings poem

## **nobody loses all the time**

I had an uncle named  
Sol who was a born failure and  
nearly everybody said he should have gone  
into vaudeville perhaps because my Uncle Sol could  
sing McCann He Was A Diver on Xmas Eve like Hell Itself which  
may or may not account for the fact that my Uncle

Sol indulged in that possibly most inexcusable  
of all to use a highfalootin phrase  
luxuries that is or to  
wit farming and be  
it needlessly  
added

my Uncle Sol's farm  
failed because the chickens  
ate the vegetables so  
my Uncle Sol had a  
chicken farm till the  
skunks ate the chickens when

my Uncle Sol  
had a skunk farm but  
the skunks caught cold and  
died and so  
my Uncle Sol imitated the  
skunks in a subtle manner

or by drowning himself in the watertank  
but somebody who'd given my Uncle Sol a Victor  
Victrola and records while he lived presented to  
him upon the auspicious occasion of his decease a  
scrumptious not to mention splendiferous funeral with  
tall boys in black gloves and flowers and everything and

i remember we all cried like the Missouri  
when my Uncle Sol's coffin lurched because  
somebody pressed a button  
(and down went  
my uncle  
Sol

and started a worm farm)

**ee cummings**