



# Los Angeles County, California

▲ Home composting workshops in Los Angeles County are held at Smart Gardening Learning Centers. Source: Los Angeles County



**POPULATION:**

10,137,915

**PROGRAM START DATE:**

2000

**BIN TYPE AND PRICE TO RESIDENTS:**

Soil Saver – \$40  
Can-O-Worms – \$65 with worms

**BINS DISTRIBUTED:**

Total number N/A. From 2013 to 2017, the County distributed 825, 905, 831, 952, 804 Soil Savers and 779, 793, 793, 647, 618 Can-O-Worms, respectively each year.

**TRAINING AND EDUCATION:**

Training required to obtain bins

## Program Summary

Los Angeles County’s Department of Public Works (DPW) Environmental Programs Division promotes home composting as part of its Smart Gardening program. At the end of select workshops given at county demonstration sites, residents can opt to purchase discounted bins. Workshop participants can buy a Soil Saver backyard bin for \$40 or a Can-O-Worms with African red worms for \$65. They are limited to a maximum of two of each type of bin per household.

## Budget

Los Angeles County’s Smart Gardening budget is approximately \$350,000 a year. This covers bin purchase, Smart Gardening workshops, maintaining ten Smart Gardening Learning Centers, workshop and bin promotion, and other expenses such as building school gardens.

## Staffing

There are no staff working full time on home composting promotion at Los Angeles County. A full-time county employee, Beverly Jones, is the principal manager of the Smart Gardening program. As part of the program, she also manages the backyard composting component. The County contracts with Bio Contractors to teach the Smart Gardening workshops and distribute the bins after each class.

## Partners

Local environmental service contractor, Bio Contractors, provides compost training and educational services for the County.

## Impacts and Benefits/Costs

The County could not provide any other information on diversion rates or benefits. Los Angeles County obtains the Soil Saver for \$58.41 and the Can-O-Worms for \$60.57 through a contract with the wholesale distributor Triformis Corporation and pays Bio Contractors \$500 to \$800 per class.

## Marketing and Outreach

Los Angeles County Environmental Services posts flyers on its website to advertise each individual Smart Gardening workshop (see Appendix A). Also, the cities within Los Angeles County where a given workshop is going to take place, will sometimes promote through their own means.

The County occasionally promotes the home composting bins more directly such as through mailing residents promotional postcards (see Appendix A). The postcards cost approximately \$900 per set of 2,500. Also, the County sometimes puts advertisements and coupons for the bin program in its newsletter (see Appendix A). The coupons allow residents to buy the Soil Saver for \$25 and the Can-O-Worms for \$30.

▲ Top: An advertisement and bin discount coupon in the Earth Wise Newsletter mailed out by Altadena and Kinneloa Mesa (see Appendix A for the full newsletter). Source: Los Angeles County Public Works

Bottom: Side two of a Smart Gardening postcard mailed to residents. Source: Los Angeles County Public Works



▲ A home composting workshop in Los Angeles County. Source: Los Angeles County

## Training and Education

Los Angeles County requires that residents take 1.5 hour workshops to obtain the subsidized bins. The County contracts with local firm Bio Contractors to offer

Beginning and Advanced Smart Gardening workshops several times a month at one of ten Smart Gardening Learning Centers. The Centers, located throughout the county, are equipped with educational and demonstration materials designed for the Smart Gardening workshops, including various backyard and worm composting bins. The beginner workshops give hands-on instruction on the basic techniques of composting, worm composting, water-wise gardening, and grass cycling. Advanced workshops cover organic gardening, landscaping with native drought-tolerant plants, and integrated pest management. The County's Smart Gardening website includes an educational booklet and video on backyard bin composting, and an educational booklet and video on worm composting, both produced by Bio Contractors.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For the videos see <https://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/sg/videos.cfm>. For booklets, see Appendix A.

## Tips for Replication

- Hire enthusiastic pro-instructors to lead your workshops.

## Contact

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## Links

### LA County Smart Gardening

[https://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/sg/gen\\_info.cfm](https://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/sg/gen_info.cfm)

### Information page on subsidized bins

<https://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/sg/>