

Free soil testing in the west shore

by Mary P Brooke, West Shore Voice News

Apply up to Wednesday April 11, 2018

● **The deadline has been extended** for participating in the soil-contaminants testing program available free through the Compost Education Centre (CEC). Applications may be submitted up to April 11 -- visit www.compost.bc.ca/healing-city-soils/

Now in its third year, CEC's Healing City Soils (partnered with Royal Roads University) is reaching out this year to homeowners in Colwood, Langford, and View Royal who grow their own food.

Last year the free soil testing for heavy metals was made available to residents in Oak Bay, and the year before that in Victoria and Esquimalt.

The program is also open to anyone planning to start food gardens or food forests on boulevards, in community plots or in their yard.

Sampling sites are volunteered by homeowners who are intending to grow food. Testing runs from mid-March til mid-May. Results are confidential.

Participants are chosen on a first-come first-served basis and at the discretion of the student teams from RRU and the project coordinator.

"All information is confidential and no addresses are shown on the Victoria Soil Quality interactive online map," says CEC executive director Marika Smith.

The program is creating a region-wide soil quality map by collecting and analyzing 100 soil samples for contaminants each year. In the first two years of the program (2016 and 2017), a total of 237 free soil tests were done.

Free soil tests for gardeners



These tests will look for CONTAMINANTS

2018: View Royal, Colwood, Langford

Submit your application up to April 11:

www.compost.bc.ca/healing-city-soils/

Potentially toxic soils can be a concern for urban food gardens as the contaminants may be taken up into or onto veggies and fruits.

A soil contaminant is an element (e.g. lead) or a chemical (e.g. diesel oil) present in the soil at a level that poses health risks to soil, plant, animal or human health. Contaminants can end up in soil or on plants through the air (dust, exhaust), water (rain, groundwater), and direct deposition (from on-site or nearby polluters).

Soil contaminants include heavy metals which are toxic to humans at certain concentrations. The list includes arsenic, copper, lead, mercury, nickel, chromium, cadmium, zinc and aluminum. Zinc and copper are necessary or beneficial to living organisms in small concentrations but are toxic above a certain concentration. Others like lead, cadmium, and mercury serve no known biological function and are always toxic

Soil remediation tips and followup workshops are available at CEC located at 1216 North Park Ave in downtown Victoria.

Basic soil nutrient analysis is also available anytime at the Compost Education Centre by donation. www.compost.bc.ca