WASTE DIVERSION

Updates from the Regional District of North Okanagan

FALL 2026

REVAMPED RETHINK WASTE GRANT - OPEN FOR APPLICATIONS

The RDNO has relaunched its ReTHINK Waste Grant program, with applications open until December 15, 2026, for projects taking place in 2027.

The program has been updated to provide greater support for community initiatives that reduce landfill waste in the North Okanagan. Community groups, non-profit organizations, and individuals are eligible to apply for funding. The grant now supports up to 100% of eligible project costs, an increase from the previous maximum of up to 50% provided in previous years.

The increased cost support is intended to reduce barriers for potential applicants and recognize the value of community-led waste reduction initiatives.

Priority will be given to projects that prioritize the first two R's – **Reduce and Reuse** – by keeping materials and products in use in our communities for as long as possible.



Examples of potential projects that the RDNO may support in this grant program include but are **not limited to**:

- Events and/or education resources that support reduce, reuse, repair or share initiatives;
- Replacement of single-use items with reusable items;
- Active collection of salvageable materials before they go to disposal facilities;
- Small scale and community composting.

For more information and to apply for the ReTHINK Waste Grant Program go to www.rdno.ca/our-communities/community-grants/rethink-waste-grant

For inquiries about the program and to discuss potential project ideas please email rethinkwaste@rdno.ca or call 250-550-3785.

LEAVES, COMPOST AND FIRE RISK: FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE



Each fall, many gardeners collect fallen leaves to use as mulch or add to backyard compost. Leaves have many benefits for gardens: they help protect soil from erosion and weathering, insulate plants from temperature extremes, and gradually break down to improve soil nutrients, add organic matter, and increase water-holding capacity. Fallen leaves also provide valuable shelter for insects and small wildlife overwintering in gardens, helping support healthy ecosystems.

Meanwhile, as summer wildfire activity continues to increase, it is important to consider the risks of combustible materials around our homes. Fortunately, we can balance the benefits of fallen leaves and compost while also reducing wildfire risk. They key is choosing appropriate mulch materials and considering when and where they are used. The FireSmart Landscaping Best Practices provides useful guidance by identifying combustible risk zones around homes. Areas closest to buildings pose the highest fire risk, while areas farther away generally present less concern.

Different mulch materials also vary in fire risk. FireSmart guidance notes that mature compost (where plant materials are completely broken down and unrecognizable) is “relatively FireSmart” and low fire risk in intermediate and extended zones away from built structures compared to other organic mulches. Another benefit of finished compost is that it can also support the growth of fire-resistant plants.

Fallen leaves provide valuable benefits over winter, but as wildfire season approaches, transitioning from leaf mulch to mature compost can help mitigate fire risk during the hot, dry summer months. Fall mulching with a light layer of soft leaves, such as maple, allows them to breakdown more readily into the soil, supporting this transition.

Consider seasonal transitions with mulching...



Fall-Winter



Spring-Summer



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Any remaining leaves and other coarse materials like stems and woody plant material collected prior to wildfire season can still be put to good use. They are good additions to backyard compost bins, where they can be mixed with food scraps and yard trimmings to accelerate composting and produce nutrient-rich material. Once fully matured, compost is generally less combustible than dried leaves, making it a useful alternative for garden mulch as wildfire season approaches.

RDNO Landfills and select Transfer Stations also accept yard and garden waste free of charge and some local municipalities provide curbside organics collection programs. These are great options for reducing the accumulation of combustible yard and garde waste. The material is used to create RDNO-Gro Compost, which is free of charge for residents. RDNO Gro is a finished compost but it can contain some wood chips that residents may consider raking or screening out as needed. Landscape centres also sell more finely screened finished compost.

Leaf mulching and traditional composting are not the only ways to support healthy yard and gardens. Bokashi is another method that processes food scraps without the need for leaves. It produces a nutrient-rich material that can be buried directly in the soil, where it breaks down quickly. Bokashi may also be used with backyard composter to help expedite the composting process.

Mature compost is valuable resource for healthy yards and gardens and has been identified as a FireSmart material in some areas. FireSmart and composting resources can help residents make informed decisions about how best to use compost and organic materials to maintain healthy and fire-resistant landscapes.

For more information about home composting, yard care, Bokashi, and the RDNO Composter Rebate Program, visit www.rdno.ca/composting



