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- Home composting and gardening pushed as PH prepares for post-COVID world

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By Chito Chavez

Environmental groups on Monday have cited the urgency of home composting and gardening as the country continues to reel from the adverse effects of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.



(PIXABAY / MANILA BULLETIN)

At a webinar organized by the Quezon City based EcoWaste Coalition, environmentalist Noli Abinales and urban container gardening (UCG) pioneer Perfecto “Jojo” Rom, Jr. drew attention to the tremendous benefits of home composting and farming in preventing and reducing waste, restoring soil nutrients, and ensuring nutritious and safe food on the table.

As communities and families are on quarantine with the COVID-19 outbreak, Abinales and Rom stressed that home composting and farming are worthwhile practices that should form part of the sustainable “new normal” following the pandemic.

“We need to separate household waste materials at source instead of mixing them up. The non-biodegradable waste can be reused, repurposed, or recycled while the bio-degradable waste can be processed into a natural fertilizer or soil amendment through composting,” said Abinales, founder of Buklod Tao, who also reminded the public to separate and safely manage household hazardous waste.

“Turning food waste and other organic waste into compost should be the norm in our post-COVID society as this will hugely reduce the volume of waste we produce and dispose of,” he pointed out.

Abinales also noted that biodegradables account for over 50 percent of the country's solid waste composition.

"Composting is as simple as ABC," Abinales said.

He said that there are various composting methods to choose from that will suit one's living conditions and needs.

An avid gardener from Davao City and founder of Home Farmers Club, Rom saw UCG as "the foundation of democratized agriculture" where available containers and spaces are used to grow fruits, vegetables, and herbs for family consumption.

Rom is the author of "UCG: The Home Farming Manual."

UCG, a blend of ecological sanitation philosophy and natural farming system, is an "emerging advocacy to simplify agriculture. It involves all who are interested to grow what they eat and eat what they grow," he explained.

"It is the technology of home farming that is used to grow food in limited spaces in urban areas."

As the "nutrition garden of the household," UCG addresses the food and nutrition security issues and needs of a family while reducing food expenditures, Rom said.

"It is the cheapest and healthiest way of food production as it utilizes bio-wastes as sources of fertilizers in gardening," he added.

Rom also viewed home-based UCG as "an effective and doable climate change adaptation measure" that should be promoted and supported.

"We don't need to become an environmentalist, a forester, or an agriculturist to care for and make this planet and its inhabitants healthy. Just make gardening a way of life starting with a single pot," he added.

For his part, Jove Benosa, Zero Waste campaigner of the EcoWaste Coalition, stated that "home composting and farming are down-to-earth solutions to our nation's swelling garbage production and our families' lack of access to adequate and nutritious food, especially during emergency situations like the coronavirus outbreak."

"Our post-COVID roadmap will be incomplete if the promotion of home composting and farming, along with other sustainable practices, will be left out," Benosa concluded.

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