COMPOST NOW AVAILABLE

The Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency is a member of the U.S. Composting Council and a participant in their Seal of Testing Assurance (STA) Program which requires that compost products are regularly tested assuring the production of consistently high quality products. STA compost products also meet all related product quality and testing requirements prescribed by state and federal regulations assuring that you purchase a safe, eco-friendly product. Compost quality and consistency are very important to our Agency and it is vital to our role to help shift our communities’ misconceptions that food waste is a waste but instead view it as a valuable resource.

WHY COMPOST

The Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency embarked on a new composting initiative to increase the county’s recycling rate and divert valuable organic material from landfill disposal. At a time when many recycling programs have hit a plateau across the nation, food waste is commonly seen as the next segment of the solid waste stream to be tapped for diversion and the Agency plans to be a part of the organics diversion movement.

Since the Ulster County and the Mid-Hudson Region of New York do not have a municipal solid waste (MSW) landfill, the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency currently transports MSW to a landfill in Central New York, at substantial economic and environmental costs. Last year, the Agency spent in excess of $1.5 million on diesel fuel, driving over 2.2 million miles and emitting over 5,300 MT per to transport waste to distant facilities.

At the same time, Ulster County is fortunate to have one of the two municipally-operated Extended Aerated Stack Pile (EASP) composting facilities in New York State. This Agency-operated facility accepts organic materials including food scraps, yard waste and other compostable materials and creates compost—a nutrient-rich soil amendment highly valued by residents, gardeners, farms, nurseries and other businesses that contribute to the viability of local communities.

The Agency’s EASP method of composting significantly reduces fuel use and greenhouse gas pollution when compared to landfills these materials. This process eliminates the need for transporting organic waste across the State and reduces methane emissions that occur when organic materials anaerobically decompose at a landfill. In addition, composting produces a valuable soil amendment that can lessen the use of energy-intensive synthetic fertilizers, stabilize soil pH and improve the soil’s ability to hold nutrients, increase water holding capacity of soil reducing watering needs and help in binding and degrading specific pollutants. The Agency currently accepts commercially generated food scraps and yard waste for the composting program. The Agency urges residents to compost in their backyards, in addition to the recycling programs already in place. Composting organic material is just as important as glass, plastic, metal and paper recycling. All of these efforts help reduce our reliance on landfills. Composting is nature’s way of recycling.
HOW TO COMPOST
Compost is what you get when yard and garden waste, kitchen scraps, and other organic materials have completely broken down into a rich, dark, crumbly material. Composting begins by mixing yard and household organic waste in a pile or bin and providing conditions that encourage decomposition. The decomposition process is fueled by millions of microscopic organisms (bacteria, fungi) that break down organic matter. After the organisms have finished their food source, they generate finished compost, which has various minerals and microorganisms in an easily accessible form for plants. A basic understanding of the composting process can produce a high-quality, usable product. It all takes a few simple steps and a little time.

COMPOST FORMULA

COMPOSTABLE WASTE
- Waste material can be either yard waste and/or certain household waste, including food scraps.
  - An ideal size for the pile is 3' x 3' x 3'.
  - Large pieces of waste material should be broken up by hand or shredded.
  - Check COMPOSTING INSTRUCTIONS list before adding waste materials.

OXYGEN
Turning the pile (mixing materials from the sides into the middle and from the bottom to the top) will allow oxygen to reach the organisms which break down the material.

MOISTURE
- The pile should be moist, like a wrung-out sponge. Dry or wet piles will slow down the decomposition process.
- Check compost moisture by squeezing a handful. A few drops should come out.
- Adjust moisture by adding water to a dry pile or adding dry material to a wet pile.

TEMPERATURE
- For optimum composting, the compost temperature should be 90° to 140°.
- Consider checking the center of the pile periodically using a thermometer with a probe.

C:N RATIO
- This pile needs a good balance of Carbon and Nitrogen materials to decompose properly.
- The ideal C:N ratio is 30:1 (30 parts carbon to 3 parts nitrogen) or 30 parts leaves to 1 part grass clippings.

COMPOST INGREDIENTS
(Not recommended to put meat, fish, scraps, dairy products, fats, grease, oil, dog or cat foods, kitty litter, pesticide treated plants/grass clippings, charred ashes, non-compostable materials such as plastics, metals or glass into a Backyard Compost Bin.)

FOOD SCARPS AND LEFTOVERS
- Meat, fish, dairy, fruit, vegetables, shells, bones, pasta, rice, eggshells, nuts/shells, bread, grains

FOOD-SOILED PAPER
- Coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, cardboard, soiled paper bags, kitchen paper towels, paper napkins, paper egg cartons, soiled paper plates

PLANTS, FLOWERS AND YARD WASTE
- Plants and flowers, landscape vegetation, holiday trees, untreated wood scraps/chips, grass clippings (just not left on lawn)

NON-COMPOSTABLE
- No grass, metals, coated paper or plastics (plastic bags, wrappers, bags, plastic foam, etc.)

COMPOST APPLICATION RATES
Compost should be used in a soil amendment to develop or improve moisture retention and add important organic matter. Compost is an excellent soil amendment to improve soil structure, helps with compaction, and aerates the soil, thereby facilitating growth and root development. It can also be used as a substitute for landscaping mulch or peat moss.

LAWN ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE
Establisment: Apply 1-2 inches of compost to the new lawn area. Incorporate into the soil to a depth of 3-4 inches. Rake soil surficial smooth prior to applying seed. Apply seed as required. Lightly water the newly seeded area.

Maintenance: Apply fine layer of 1/2 to 1 inch of compost and rake evenly across the lawn. Reseed if needed and lightly water.

COMPOST MAINTENANCE

FOR A HOLDING UNIT
- Add material to the holding unit in batches from the collection material, or materials become available.
- A week after adding material, the pile should be turned.
- The pile is done allowing the following week and whenever the pile starts to cool.
- Add a few shovels of soil.
- Check moisture.

FOR A TURNING UNIT
- Thoroughly mix compostable material within the unit.
- When the pile cools off, it should be mixed into the second bin.
- A new pile should be started in the first bin.
- The process should be repeated with the compost being mixed together in the third bin.
- Add a few shovels of soil.
- Check moisture.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

PROBLEM | POSSIBLE CAUSE | SOLUTION
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Rotten Odor | Too much moisture, compaction | Turn pile or add dry materials
Ammonia Odor | Too much nitrogen | Add a high nitrogen material such as sawdust, fall leaves, wood chips, or straw
Low Pile Temperature | Pile too small, Pile too dry, Lack of air in pile | Make pile larger or insulate with straw, add water while turning pile
Turn pile