

Composting Food Scraps



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Prince George's County Organics Compost Facility

- ▶ For 25 years, MES has maintained and operated the compost facility in Prince George's County.
- ▶ Traditionally, composting 40-60,000 tons of yard trim per year using the open windrow model.
- ▶ As of May 2013, the site started composting with food scraps using Gore Cover technology with a 3 heap pilot system.
- ▶ Avg. of 8,000 tons food residuals is composted each year. (Currently)



Open Windrow Model: Tried and True

- ▶ Current yard trim composting utilizes 52 acres of paved blacktop divided into 3 areas.
- ▶ From raw materials to finished product takes approx. 6 to 8 months.
- ▶ Requires a specialized machine to turn the windrows minimum of once a week.
- ▶ When product is ready for screening, the rows are pushed together or “consolidated” and the open pad space is used to “lay out” the material to dry.
- ▶ This model can dramatically effected by ambient temperatures and weather conditions.



Gore Cover Model: New and Improved

- ▶ Using the Gore system, the entire composting operation can be consolidated into a 1/3 of the blacktop space.
- ▶ Allows the site to accept and process food scraps as a source of nitrogen.
- ▶ Covers are designed to trap odor molecules, and keep ambient weather conditions from altering the composting process.
- ▶ From start to finish takes only 8-10 weeks.
- ▶ Enables landfill diversion for food residuals.



Carbon to Nitrogen or C:N

- ▶ Leaves and brush are hauled to the compost facility year round.
- ▶ Leaves make up the bulk of our source of carbon.
- ▶ Grass is hauled for a short time of roughly 20-26 weeks depending on summer time conditions.
- ▶ Grass is used as a nitrogen source.
- ▶ Food scraps are hauled to the facility Monday - Friday.
- ▶ Food scraps are used as a nitrogen source.



Carbon to Nitrogen or C:N

- ▶ Only leaves and grass are mixed to form windrows.
- ▶ Food, leaves and mulch are mixed to form the Gore heaps.
- ▶ A ratio of 27:1 is what we found works well for the open windrow process, using grass and leaves.
- ▶ A ratio of 30:1 is what we found works best for the Gore process, composting food and leaves.
- ▶ Why the difference?



Why Commercially Acceptable Compostable Products?

- ▶ Prince George's County passed a plastic bag ban that took effect January of 2014 for yard trim.
- ▶ To meet the needs of local businesses and the industry, food residuals are accepted in certain compostable bags.
- ▶ Along with compostable bags; special PLA products, cardboard, compostable paper products like clam shells and lunch trays are also accepted in the food scraps stream. Only at a C:N of 30:1 will these products properly compost.



Acceptable Compostable Organics

- Fruits and vegetables □ Dairy products - milk, butter, cheese - No containers!
- Bread, pasta, grains (no raw dough) □ Seafood (including shellfish)
- Eggs & Egg shells □ Paper towels, napkins - kitchen only
- Coffee grounds, filters (no “Keurig style” cups) □ Paper plates and cups
- Tea bags - Loose Tea □ Food-soiled newspaper
- Meat (including bones) □ Pizza boxes - clean or “greasy”
- Corrugated fruit & vegetable boxes □ Paper bags (uncoated) with food scraps
- Paper ice cream containers □ Leftovers and spoiled food
- Compostable bags *
- Approved compostable tableware

Acceptable Compostable Products



Building a greener future:

- ▶ Quality in is quality out.
- ▶ Bad loads are rejected at the haulers expense.
- ▶ Zero tolerance policy for contamination.
- ▶ Yard trim is only accepted loose or in compostable paper yard bags.



How is a GORE heap built?





Pride and Team work!



Questions and Comments?



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