



COMPOST MANUAL

WHAT IS COMPOSTING?

Composting is the process by which organic matter is broken down by microorganisms into nutrient-rich soil. All such material decomposes naturally, but by managing the process we can accelerate the rate of decomposition and adjust the chemistry and nutrient content of the final product to best suit its intended use. Composting can be performed on any scale and at any intensity, from idle household piles to mechanized industrial facilities that process the food and yard waste of entire cities.

WHY WE COMPOST

By returning organic matter to soil-based nutrient cycles, composting addresses two major environmental concerns:

- o it keeps waste out of landfills and incinerators.
- o it offers an alternative source of crop nourishment to the synthetic, petroleum-based fertilizers that pollute our watersheds.

People don't often think of the challenges of modern waste disposal and industrial agriculture as related, but like most questions of sustainability they are closely linked. Yard waste and food scraps make up 26% of municipal solid waste in the United States. While the U.S. composts 65% of its yard waste, only 2.5% of our national food waste is composted. **Food and yard scraps account for almost 20% of our total waste output, about 50 million tons of waste each year that could be turned into valuable soil but instead fill landfills and incinerators.**¹

Instead of nourishing farms, gardens, and lawns without the vast quantities of organic matter and nutrients contained in this waste, we purchase and apply about 2.3 million tons of synthetic fertilizer annually.²

HOW COMPOSTING WORKS IN PUBLIC SPACES:

Compost in Sharples (fruit only), Essie Mae's Snack Bar, and the Kohlberg and Science Center coffee bars is collected in large green bins and taken out daily. These facilities cannot accommodate other organic waste because they are uncovered receptacles—not smellproof—in public spaces.

HOW COMPOSTING WORKS IN YOUR DORM:

There should be a labeled, 2.5 or 5 gallon tight-seal compost container on every hall. The buckets are emptied and washed at least once a week. Compost is taken by student volunteers to a designated drop off location. Student Green Advisors (GAs) will work with each hall to establish a system for taking out the compost. Please contact Yvonne Socolar at ysocola1 if you do not have a bucket or for information about drop off locations.

WHAT CAN BE COMPOSTED AT SWARTHMORE COLLEGE:



- Fruit and raw vegetable scraps (w/o stickers)
- Greenware® compostable plates and cups
- Teabags (w/o staples)
- Eggshells
- Sunchips® bags ³
- Food that does not contain the following...

WHAT CANNOT BE COMPOSTED AT SWARTHMORE COLLEGE:



- Meat & Dairy
- Fats & Oils

(Why? These foods do not break down as quickly and attract unwanted animal visitors to the compost heap.)

COMMON COMPOST CONCERNS:

Q: Won't a vat of stagnant food and other decomposing stuff stink up the hallway?

A: Nope. Well, it shouldn't as long as the lid is securely sealed and the compost is taken out regularly. So if you don't want the hall to smell like your quad, make sure you put the lid on tightly and you'll only have to deal with the dorm's usual aromas.

Q: What about flies/rodents? Will a compost bin attract them to my hall?

A: Again, if the lid stays on tight while not in use, flies and rodents will not be attracted to the compost bin.

Q: Should I speak to an EVS technician about my questions or concerns regarding compost?

A: No, Environmental Services does not deal with compost in any way. The EVS employees are aware that there is composting in the dorms, but it is not their responsibility. It's your GA, or in some cases your RA, who you can talk compost with. In fact, they live to talk compost.

Brought to you by:



Text: War on Waste Team
Design: Blaine O'Neill

QUESTIONS? WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

- Green Advisors: Jacob Phillips (jphilli3)
- Good Food Compost: Jean Dahlquist (jdahlqu1)
- Good Food Garden: Jesse Marshall (jmarsha1)

(1) EPA, "Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States: Facts and figures for 2008." Available at <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/nonhaz/municipal/pubs/msw2008rpt.pdf>

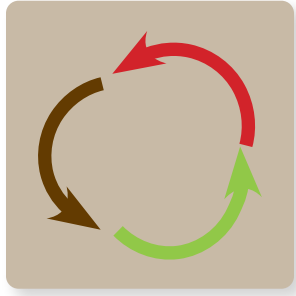
(2) USDA Economic Research Service, "U.S. Consumption of Plant Nutrients." Available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/FertilizerUse/>

(3) http://www.sunchips.com/healthier_planet.shtml?s=content_compostable_packaging

WHERE DOES SWARTHMORE COMPOST GO?

Student workers coordinated by the Good Food Project collect vegetable waste from Sharples Dining Hall and compostable plates and cups from the snack and coffee bars. Green Advisors and student volunteers deliver resident hall compost to central pickup locations. The Good Food workers transport the waste via golf cart to a staging area behind the track grandstand, where it joins leaves and clippings added by the Scott Arboretum. From there, the materials are taken to the Swarthmore Borough-Nether Providence municipal composting facility, located on college land to the west of Crum Creek. The facility processes the material generated on campus separately from leaves collected in the towns' streets and yards each fall. A

specialized machine called a Scarab chops and mixes long windrows of compost, accelerating the process of decomposition. The leaves become mulch that residents can pick up free of charge each spring. The more diverse organic waste from the College produces a high quality, nutrient rich soil amendment. The Scott Arboretum and the Good Food Project use this compost and the leaf mulch on the grounds and in the organic student garden. Funded by a grant from the PA Department of Environmental Protection, the college is partnering with worms.com to process some compost on campus in two new solar-powered rotary composters. They produce mature compost more quickly and allow for more careful monitoring and adjusting.



- WASTE SOURCES
- COMPOST PROCESSING
- FINISHED COMPOST