

CAMPUS COMPOSTING MANUAL



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INTRODUCTION



Campus Composting Manual: Our Mission

The goal of this manual is to equip the reader, whether you are a student, staff, or faculty member, with the tools and confidence necessary to begin the process of creating or expanding a compost program on their campus.

This is not a step-by-step guide because there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Every compost program has to be tailored to the unique needs of the institution it serves.

You may well require additional information or training to finish building out a compost program. If that's the case, we strongly recommend you reach out to either PLAN or USCC - we will gladly help you ourselves or point you in the right direction.

What advice do you have for other campuses starting compost programs?

Begin with a waste audit to gather data on your waste stream. Ensure you are in compliance with state compost permitting requirements. Have them at the table from the very beginning. Start small and focus on back-of-house and pre-consumer efforts to begin with and expand from there. Focus upstream on purchasing when you decide to move to post-consumer and try to source compostable options as much as possible to ensure sorting is easier. Get everything into place before you get started. Education, education, education. Celebrate your successes!

Jennifer Maxwell, Sustainability Program Manager, Office of Sustainability, Appalachian State University

Mapping Out Sources of Food Waste

An all-too-common mistake is to assume that food waste is only generated at dining halls.

Look around your campus. Are there compost bins in residence halls? Food cooked in a dorm, or brought back in a to-go container, will end up in the trash if there's no option for compost. What about in academic buildings and faculty offices - professors need to eat too!

Events that include food, and especially events that involve bringing guests from off-campus (like football games), can generate huge amounts of food waste. Events that are catered, either by campus dining services or a contractor, are guilty of the same.

Developing a Composting Proposal

The Basics: Why is Composting a Good Thing?

Zero Waste

Most folks who approach composting from the viewpoint of cost efficiency and solid waste management are seeking the ability to reduce their waste stream. Depending on your area and how you classify organic waste, anywhere from 20 - 40% of your waste stream can be comprised of organic waste. The higher end estimates are a result of counting biodegradable paper, green waste, biosolids, and food waste all as part of the organic waste stream.

Indeed, numerous states forbid the disposal of green waste (grass, leaves, tree and wood trimmings) in landfills. Some states, cities, and counties go even further by forbidding the landfilling of food waste generated at certain quantities

See more about who has landfill bans here:
www.compostingcouncil.org/landfill-organics-bans

This practice not only reduces the cost of trucking these biodegradable materials to often far-away landfills and incinerators at a great cost, but preserves space at local landfills. It also directly reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Plant and Soil Benefits

Compost enhances and restores the properties of soils and growing media physically (structurally), chemically (nutritionally), and biologically.

Improving Soils

Compost affects soil pH applied at quantities even as low as 10 - 20 tons per acre. It can help buffer and stabilize soil pH. Compost boosts the cation exchange capacity of soils, so they retain nutrients longer. It also increases the bioavailability of nutrients, which allows plants grown in the soil to more easily uptake nutrients with less leaching than chemically fertilized soil.



Compost as a soil supplement⁵

EDUCATION, OUTREACH, & ADVERTISING YOUR COMPOST PROGRAM

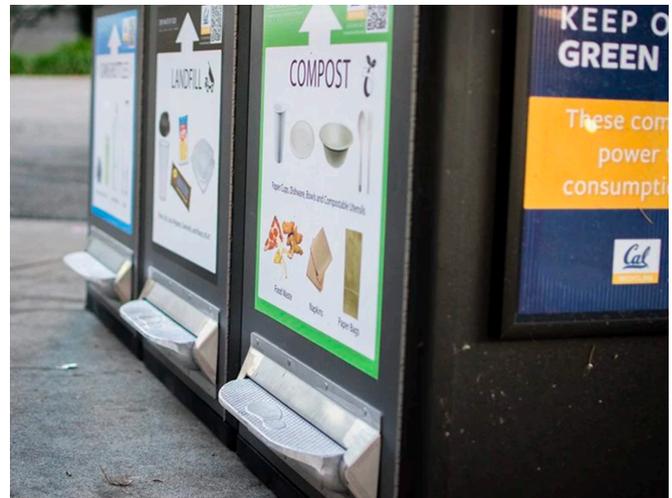
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User-Friendly Bin Design, Setup, & Signage

Having an established composting system on your campus won't do any good if no one uses it. It needs to be both intuitive and simple to use so that even people who aren't passionate about waste will participate.

Here are some bin design best-practice tips:

- What color means "compost" to your campus? Green is the color most commonly used to denote compost, but it may already be in use for trash or recycling.¹⁴ If there are any existing organics disposal projects on campus or in the surrounding community, it's important to be consistent with them. Contradictory existing waste stream systems invite confusion.



Standardized bins and signage at UC Berkeley¹³