



Government and Construction Fact Sheet

Illinois Food Scrap Coalition

The Illinois Food Scrap Coalition (IFSC) is a group of organizations and businesses that are dedicated to advancing food scrap composting in Illinois through education, program implementation, policy, and advocacy.

Compost Benefits

- Improve soil structure;
- Increase heavy traffic soils infiltration, reducing erosion;
- Improves water holding capacity in sandy soils;
- Supplies a variety of macro and micronutrients;
- May control soil-borne plant pathogens;
- Supplies organic matter;
- Improves ability of soils to hold nutrients for plants
- Supplies beneficial micro-organisms to soils;
- Improves & stabilizes soil pH;
- Can bind and degrade specific pollutants.

Government

Compost is utilized by local, county, and state governments for a variety of purposes including: Transportation construction projects, park and open space maintenance, turf and athletic field management, and landscaping around government buildings. Governments may also create or enforce soil amendment requirements for residential and commercial construction projects.

Construction

Compost can be used as a soil amendment in many construction and transportation projects in order to prevent erosion, increase plant growth, and decrease water run-off. Compost can also be used in berms, socks, and blankets to decrease the erosion of roadsides. Road and construction project managers specify the materials to be used in the project scope and bid documents. The construction companies purchase compost directly from a wholesaler or processor and the cost of the product is the most important factor. Construction companies may limit the use of compost because of a lack of awareness about procurement standards, limited access to the product, and the geography of the project site. In some sites, the ground may be too steep to apply compost and a spray-on liquid fertilizer is applied. In order to increase the use of compost, awareness about procurement standards must be increased.



Nationwide, 31 Departments of Transportation specify the use of compost in transportation projects. Illinois began specifying compost as a soil amendment when yard waste was banned from landfills in 1990. The department currently specifies a commercial compost and topsoil blend consisting of a maximum of 40% compost by volume.

Barriers to Compost Use

Government entities are limited in their use of compost because of its availability across the state. They are also limited based on the individual engineers and landscape architects managing projects. Some may opt for non-compost materials because of the costs of purchase, transportation, and application of compost. Some may not be

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Compost Products

Governments often receive compost free of charge from compost processors. They may put in bid specifications on an as-needed basis or receive an initial amount and purchase additional compost for additional projects.

The following products are used:

- Consistent, certified compost products (U.S. Composting Council STA Certified)
- Quality of compost products varies based on applications.
 - Premium compost is used in public areas such as parks, fields, fairgrounds, and in ornamental planting.
 - Lower quality products may be used in construction, particularly in transportation projects.
- Compost must meet visual requirements (free of trash and other large contaminants)
- Compost must be free of odors

This factsheet was produced in partnership with the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center, a division of the Prairie Research Institute at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

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Sources

- communitygarden.org | American Community Garden Association, "Resources"
- gardenworksproject.org | GardenWorks Project, "What We Do", 2014
- epa.gov | United States Environmental Protection Agency, "Catalogue of State DOT Compost Usage Experience", 2000
- compostingcouncil.org | United States Composting Council, "Compost and its Benefits", 2008

convinced of the benefits of compost when compared to commercial fertilizers and top soils.

Compost also requires additional time and labor for its application, while many commercial fertilizers can simply be sprayed. A lack of education about compost may lead to the incorrect application of the product. Many staff members may simply be unaware of the availability of compost products. In order to increase the use of compost, education among project engineers, landscape architects, other staff members, and local residents is key. The education should include the benefits of compost as well as proper education techniques.



Parks and Gardens

Compost can be used by local governments to upgrade vacant land so it may be sold or used as community land for parks and gardens. Parks utilize compost to upgrade turf on fields and to grow ornamental flowers. Compost improves soil health and plant growth, which makes it ideal for the creation of community gardens. In addition to providing gardens with nutrients, amending soil with compost improves water retention, which decreases the need for irrigation. There are approximately 18,000 Community Gardens across the United States and Canada, a huge market opportunity.



The GardenWorks Project, a community gardening organization located in the western suburbs of Chicago, uses compost to create residential and community gardens. The organization assists food insecure families with home gardening. Each family is supplied with compost, plants, seeds, and garden coaching for two years. Additionally, the GardenWorks Project maintains a community garden in Glen Ellyn and donates all harvested vegetables to a local food pantry.

IFSC Composters

The following companies are members of IFSC and include food scraps as a feedstock in their compost process.

- Compost Supply
- Garden Prairie Organics
- Green Organics
- Land and Lakes
- Waste Management