

Appendix I

News Releases

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Compost: Something Every Soil Can Use (May 2004)

Composting is a natural, biological process through which microorganisms break down solid organic material into a humus-like substance. Grass clippings, leaves, prunings, bark, fruit and vegetable waste, crop residue, woodchips, sawdust, chopped brush and various other organic residues can be used to create good compost. By composting, the volume of organic residues disposed in landfills is reduced, which conserves landfill space and produces a beneficial product-compost.

Compost, a dark, organically rich material that has been used for decades, serves as a soil amendment and as a nutrient source for plants. It can be applied as a mulch layer to reduce evaporation, or incorporated into the soil to increase soil organic matter, thereby improving soil structure and water-holding capacity. Compost also enhances the chemical character of soil by buffering soil pH (preventing rapid pH changes) and serving as a source of essential plant nutrients including nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. Since most soils are deficient in organic matter, just about any soil type will benefit from the addition of compost.

One of the most abundant sources of material for producing compost in Central Texas is the dairy industry. Several commercial operations produce dairy manure compost for sale to the public. Composting removes much of the moisture from dairy manure, which makes it easier and cheaper to transport. In addition, composting virtually eliminates odors and kills most weed seeds, bacteria and other potential pathogens, resulting in a rich-textured product with an earthy smell.

Dairy manure compost is produced in the Bosque River Watershed to provide an alternative outlet for dairy manure, which decreases the amount of phosphorus potentially released by dairy farms within the Watershed. Phosphorus is an important plant nutrient, but in excess can pose a threat to water quality in streams, rivers and lakes. By utilizing dairy manure to produce compost for application off the farm, both dairies and compost users are benefiting.

Dairy manure compost can be utilized for agricultural, horticultural and landscaping applications. For instance, dairy manure compost can be applied and incorporated for production of row crops such as corn, grain sorghum and cotton. In addition, it can be incorporated for establishment of perennial forage crops like Bermudagrass or topdressed onto existing stands. Compost can be incorporated prior to establishment or topdressed on lawns, athletic fields, and golf courses. In some cases, compost is used to control erosion and promote revegetation of disturbed sites such as road right-of-ways. In cities, filter berms made of compost are used around construction sites to reduce erosion, and once building is complete, are simply incorporated into the soil to promote revegetation.

Rates of compost application will vary depending on the particular site and purpose. Because some compost contains plant nutrients, both an analysis of the compost (usually available from the supplier) and a soil test should be obtained to match rates of application with plant needs. Several methods exist for applying compost, ranging from hand application for small jobs involving only a few cubic yards to high capacity spreaders and blower trucks for material to large areas.

Most composting operations allow on-site pickup of small quantities of compost, and many offer a delivery service for larger amounts. For more details, contact your local County Extension Office or visit <http://compost.tamu.edu>.

Local Soil & Water Conservation District offers Payment for Compost (June 2004)

Private citizens living outside the Bosque River Watershed who are interested in using compost for agricultural purposes now have the funds available to do so. Individual landowners within the participating Soil and Water Conservation Districts are eligible to receive a reduced price of \$4 per cubic yard on compost purchases up to 4,000 cubic yards.

To apply for the reduced price, participants must first request assistance from their local Soil and Water District for the development of a certified "Water Quality Management Plan". This plan will help the producer determine the amount of compost needed. Following approval of their Plan, the producer simply contacts an approved dairy manure compost facility to arrange purchase, delivery and application of the material. By participating in this program, producers receive a reduced price and the associated benefits of applying compost.

In addition to the necessary forms, private producers may also be required to complete a pre and post compost use assessment survey. Permitted CAFOs and AFOs are not eligible for this reduced price.

The program is available through the Upper Leon, Cross Timbers or Hamilton-Coryell Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The purpose of the incentive is to utilize the abundant dairy manure in the Bosque River Watershed by applying it as compost to landscapes in other watersheds.

Those interested in participating in the incentive program should contact the Upper Leon Soil and Water Conservation District (attention: Missy Jones) at 325-356-5186 extension 3 or the Texas Water Resources Institute (attention: Cecilia Gerngross) at 979-458-1138. Also, additional information may be found at <http://compost.tamu.edu>.

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Incentives Exist for Dairy Compost Purchasers (July 2004)

Compost is a dark, organically rich material that has been used for decades as a soil amendment and nutrient source for plants. When applied as a mulch layer, compost helps reduce evaporation, or when incorporated into the soil, compost increases soil organic matter, thereby improving soil structure and water-holding capacity. Compost also enhances the chemical character of the soil by buffering soil pH (preventing rapid pH changes) and serving as a source of essential plant nutrients including nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.

Dairy manure compost is produced in and near the Bosque River Watershed to provide an alternative outlet for dairy manure, decreasing the amount of phosphorus and other nutrients on dairy farms within the Watershed. Phosphorus is an important plant nutrient, but in excess can pose a threat to water quality in streams, rivers and lakes.

Several local operations are producing dairy manure compost: Bosque River Compost, Organic Residual Reclamation, Erath Earth Inc., Gustine Compost, O'Neals Compost, Producers Compost, and Texas Best Compost. These facilities are located in Stephenville, Dublin, Hico, and Gustine.

By purchasing dairy manure compost from one of the approved facilities, participants are eligible to receive incentives for supporting their local economy and helping keep a safe and healthy environment.

For a limited time only, the Composted Manure Incentive Program, funded by the Environmental Protection Agency and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, is offering public entities an incentive payment of \$5 per cubic yard of dairy manure compost purchased from the Bosque Watershed.

Through this same Program, a similar incentive exists for private producers. The Upper Leon, Cross Timbers and Hamilton-Coryell Soil and Water Conservation Districts provide a \$4 per cubic yard price reduction on dairy manure compost purchases. Private producers within one of these Soil and Water Conservation Districts and outside of the Bosque River Watershed may receive the reduced price given all related requirements are met.

For more information on purchasing dairy manure compost or the related incentive programs, contact your local Extension office or visit <http://compost.tamu.edu>.

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TCEQ Announces Rebate for Compost Purchases (November 2005)

Up to \$180,000 available for distribution to large compost consumers

Rebates on composted manure purchases by agricultural producers, landscapers, retail distributors of lawn and garden products, and other large compost consumers located outside the North Bosque River valley are available for a limited-time. Rebate funds are provided through Clean Water Act grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to improve water quality in the North Bosque River. Storm-water runoff containing manure has been a significant source of phosphorus in the North Bosque River. By composting the manure, a problem becomes a valuable resource.

The rebate of \$3 per cubic yard is available for purchases of qualifying composted dairy manure up to a total of 4,000 cubic yards per customer. The rebate is distributed through some of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board's conservation districts until August 31, 2006, or until the rebate fund is exhausted, whichever comes first.

To qualify for the rebate, an agricultural producer first develops a "Nutrient Management Plan" with assistance from a participating Soil and Water Conservation District. This plan will help the producer determine the amount of compost needed. (This requirement does not apply to retail distributors and landscapers.) The buyer then contacts a participating dairy manure compost facility to arrange purchase, delivery, and application of the material. Compost buyers also complete rebate forms noting how the compost is used and the total cost of using the compost. Permitted Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations and Animal Feeding Operations are not eligible for this rebate.

For more information, go to: http://compost.tamu.edu/rebate_program.php. To find out if you qualify, contact Missy Jones at the Upper Leon Soil and Water Conservation District-325-356-5186 extension 3 or Cecilia Gerngross at Texas Cooperative Extension-979-458-1138.