



Composting

In most organic recycling programs, food scraps and food-soiled paper products are sent to a composting facility. Organic waste is recycled into compost instead of taking up space in a landfill or being burned in an incinerator.



Composting off-site

Composting is taking off at schools throughout the metro area. It's good for the environment, gives students an easy way to be green and helps reduce a school's garbage costs because organic waste comes with lower tipping fees and taxes. "The interest is growing just dramatically," said John Jaimez, an organics and recycling specialist who has helped launch similar programs at seven Hennepin County school districts in the last five years. "As much as 80 percent of a school's trash comes from its cafeteria and kitchen, and about three quarters of that is organic," said Jaimez. For these new programs, each school has been issued five compost bins, one

for every day of the week along with biodegradable bags that are sealed after lunch to keep out rodents. A



separate truck picks up the bags once a week. All told, the 130 or so schools that Jaimez works with compost approximately 2000 tons per year. Contributions come from St. Louis Park, Minnetonka, Robbinsdale, Orono, Brooklyn Center, Edina and Wayzata.

"Statewide, schools account for about half of composted trash," said Ginny Black, organics and recycling coordinator with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Veteran school compost coordinators say it can be tough to get older kids to separate their trash, but young students dive right in.

What schools are doing

Schumann Elementary School - Orono

The district started composting this fall, student monitors help their peers dispose of trash properly at lunch. "We bought grabbers for them, and they love fishing in there," said Kris Diller, the district's child nutrition supervisor. "If somebody accidentally drops a fork in the wrong trash can," she added, "they don't give up until that fork has been retrieved." Other schools that compost have been able to cut down dramatically on garbage hauling. "In Orono, two schools that used to have three pickups a week are now down to one," said Diller.

In an organics composting program, all food scraps and paper food service items are placed in a single container. A hauler will pick up the waste and deliver it to a composting facility. After about 12 months, the material will have been recycled into valuable compost. Finished compost is an organic-rich soil amendment that is used to improve soil structure and water-

holding capacity thus reducing the leaching of nutrients. Compost prevents soil erosion and polluted storm water



runoff from contaminating our wetlands, lakes and streams. Compost can also be used to reclaim marginal soils. Compost is used in gardens, golf courses, playing fields, road construction projects and landscaping.

Materials accepted in organics composting programs include:

- All food waste (including meat and bones)
- All food-soiled paper products including:
 - Paper cups and plates
 - Paper towels, placemats, and napkins
 - Milk and juice cartons
 - Parchment paper
 - Paper bags
 - Pizza boxes and other paper food containers

- Coffee filters
- Teabags
- Waxed cardboard
- Paper vacuum bags
- Floral trimmings
- Plants
- Certified compostable food service items

Composting On-Site

The rewards of composting at your school can be educational as well as environmental. Many schools have successfully incorporated traditional composting programs into their waste reduction programs.

Tumbler Composting

Can be done outdoors if temperatures remain above freezing. Ideal for 1 to 25 pounds of food waste per day. Requires moderate Labor produces minimal odors. Can compost modest amounts of meat and dairy. Many similar systems available.



System Composting

System Composting must be done outdoors and requires machinery or moderate labor and space. Composts up to 100 pounds per day. What can be composted varies between systems.

Resources

Cafeteria Composting In Lane County, Oregon Schools

http://www.myeugene.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Compost-Manual_2012.pdf

Hennepin County Environmental Services Organics coordinator—612-348-5893

www.hennepin.us/organics

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

timothy.farnan@state.mn.us

or 651-757-2348

Examples of what schools have done to promote organics recycling:

Carondelet Catholic School

www.carondeletcatholicsschool.com/carondelet_composting.aspx

Minneapolis Public Schools

http://mpsgoesgreen.mpls.k12.mn.us/Organics_Recycling.html

Resource management contracts. See “resource management programs” at

www.pca.state.mn.us

School Waste Composition Study

www.pca.state.mn.us/schoolwaste

SEEK Website (Lists 8-10 composting links)

http://www.seek.state.mn.us/sb_topic.cfm?topic=Compost

163 Things you can compost (with Marion Owens)

<http://www.plantea.com/compost-materials.htm>

See WRAP Information Library page - additional PowerPoints and Publications:

“Get FoodWISE Program”

Food Waste in Schools Elimination Handbook