

COMPOST 101

In the U.S., approximately 40% of all food is wasted. This is problematic for our environment and our economy. Composting this large amount of waste is a valuable solution.

How does composting work?

Composting is nature's way of recycling. It is the process of converting organic materials, such as food scraps and yard waste trimmings, into a dark, earthy-smelling soil amendment thereby preserving valuable nutrient-rich resources. Food scraps and yard waste may be processed on-site, or through a commercial program to include meat, bones, fats, food-soiled paper and other certified compostable items.



What are the benefits of composting?

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Reduces soil erosion
- Improves soil structure
- Improves water retention which reduces irrigation needs
- Reduces synthetic chemical needs which protects watersheds
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions
- Reduces volume of materials in landfills and need for landfill expansions

ECONOMIC

- Reduces cost of disposal fees
- Generates more jobs than landfilling and incineration
- Contributes to local agriculture and food economies
- Minimizes taxes and fees for landfill development and clean-up



Composting in Illinois

MUNICIPALITIES

In 1990, Illinois banned yard waste material from the landfill, helping to create a basic composting industry and infrastructure. In 2009, requirements were clarified to allow for commercial food scrap composting, and were adjusted to allow small urban farms and facilities to accept food waste for compost piles under a certain size. Many municipalities now offer curbside organics collection year-round for food scraps. Today, there are over 25 municipal programs in Illinois, ranking the state #4 in the nation.



BUSINESSES & INSTITUTIONS

Institutions and businesses in Illinois, including grocery stores, schools, universities, hospitals, hotels, communities of faith, restaurants and residential buildings are composting food scraps. Many use a commercial composting service while others are composting food scraps on-site. This results in opportunities for cost savings, education, new partnerships, and institutions achieving sustainability goals.

SCHOOLS

Schools across the state are educating students about reducing waste and composting as well as making operational changes to divert food scraps from the landfill. This provides opportunities for student leadership and engagement in sustainability while also teaching the importance of environmental stewardship and community responsibility. Some schools compost on-site while others have partnered with haulers and compost processors.



EVENTS



Events large and small are raising the bar on responsible event production, expanding their waste diversion efforts to collect food scraps for composting. Whether it's a music festival, athletic event, conference or meeting, these gatherings offer unique settings to engage a variety of audiences. From attendees and fans to food vendors and facility staff, rock stars to all-stars, the educational impact is broad and the potential volume of food scraps diverted from landfill is large. It just takes the right tools, training and partners - which we are lucky to have here in Illinois.

How do I get involved?

Check out a full list of resources at:

IllinoisComposts.org/Resources

or send an email to:

IllinoisComposts@gmail.com



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Food:Land:Opportunity
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