



US Composting Council®

Waste-No-More --- Organic Residuals Serve a Higher Purpose for Better Soil Health, Water Conservation and Greenhouse Gas Reductions

Banana peels and other organic matter have a useful afterlife, whether in a backyard compost pile, at a community composting centre or through the larger-scale efforts of both composting and anaerobic digestion. Over 40% of waste generated is organic materials – created in home and restaurant kitchens, gardens, bathrooms, on farms, in factories and supermarkets, to name just a few sources. While the traditional “solution” for a throw-away society has been landfills and incinerators, the recycling of organics can be put to good use. To do this, we need both the will and the way.

On the occasion of *International Compost Awareness Week 2017* (May 7 – 13), the potential of these otherwise underappreciated resources is being celebrated to showcase the power within each of us to make a positive impact on our communities and environment, supported by a global network of organizations devoted to organics recycling and compost use.

While details vary amongst countries and continents, the following facts and benefits about organics recycling and compost use transcend political and cultural boundaries:

- The use of landfill space and incineration can be reduced by at least one-third when organics are recycled. Focused attention on recycling organic residuals is key to achieving high diversion rates.
- Methane, a greenhouse gas twenty-five times as powerful as carbon dioxide, can be significantly reduced through the recycling of organics instead of their being landfilled.
- Soil health and productivity is dependent on organic matter in the form of compost or humus to provide the sustenance for the biological diversity in the soil. Plants depend on this to convert materials into plant-available nutrients and to keep the soil well-aerated. Additional benefits include the reduced need for pesticide usage to ward off soil-borne and other plant diseases.
- Soil erosion is mitigated and water-holding capacity improved through compost's enhancement of soil structure which helps bind soil particles together. Without good soil structure, soil erosion can remove nutrients from the soil as well as carry sediments into waterways thereby creating new sources of pollution.
- Compost offers a significant answer to climate change mitigation. Compost's return to the soil serves as a “carbon bank”, helping to store carbon thereby removing it from the atmosphere.

Through organics recycling, quality soil can happen naturally. But it's based on one main equation: what you take out, you must put back in. The ongoing addition of organic matter and compost provides soil with the texture, structure and nutrients needed to create a positive environment for plant growth.

Throughout International Compost Awareness Week, community events will be held to encourage and celebrate organics recycling. All types of organics recycling – from “do it yourself” composting in your backyard, community garden or nearby community centre to large-scale community-wide composting and anaerobic digestion – are being promoted. The importance of the use of compost to bring Life back to the soils for strong, healthy plant growth, improved water quality and conservation is also being highlighted.

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