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HOW TO COMMUNITY COMPOST

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Community composting is a model that sources organic materials from local residents, engages the community in the process and subsequently uses the produced compost for benefit to local soil.

Research Community Programs

Research an accessible community compost program in your area where residents contribute their home organic waste for local use.



Subscription

A monthly subscription fee – usually low – is typically part of a community program.

Container

A program container with lid is provided for home organic waste. Containers will have a sealable, airtight lid that will prevent odor from escaping.



Input Guidelines

Follow every guideline stated by your program. Accepted materials are likely displayed on the container. Otherwise – a reference will be provided.

Typically any organic materials designated for home composting are the same for community programs. Some community programs may accept animal protein - which you *would not include* in your home compost.

- Peels - Banana, apple, peach, carrot, potato, etc.
- Rinds – all citrus, melons, avocado, etc.
- Stems - bell pepper stems, herb, cherry
- Cores – apple, tomato
- Coffee grounds, loose tea leaves – *no tea or coffee filters or bags unless they are compostable*
- Egg shells
- Rice | Grains | Legumes | Nuts – cooked or dried
- *Any expired, molded, petrified produce*
- LARGE ITEMS. It is helpful to break down rinds of watermelon and pumpkin for example. Break corn cobs into two+ pieces. Realize this is intuitive. It helps a more even degradation.

A note on PLU LABELS – Please remove PLU labels from fruits and vegetables! When compostable PLU labels are widely in use – you will be able to leave on the produce.



Storing Your Container

It is recommended that your container is stored in your home or garage to keep it protected from the elements. The container will last longer.

Another option is storing your compost container in a garage or closet and keeping a smaller container in your kitchen for day-to-day use. Once the kitchen container is full – it can easily be emptied into the larger container. *No special container is needed – you likely have something usable in your home.*



Organic Waste to Community Program

Drop off dates and times will be provided – typically a couple of times each week. A new collection container will be provided.

Tracking

Your program may weight your container to track the contribution to their program. An in-vessel compost system is shown here.



End Use

Resulting compost is used in a number of ways. It can be used as a soil amendment at a Food Bank's organic garden. The garden's produce is subsequently distributed to families in need.

The compost may also contribute to community gardens and to subscribers who are donating organic waste.



Community Compost Benefits¹

Like other models of composting - community composting offers benefits such as diverting organic materials from landfills. Ultimately the process contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and producing a valuable soil amendment - compost.

Environmental

Community composting **builds local soil health**. Food scraps and yard trimmings are best kept within communities where they can be composted and returned to local soils in gardens, parks, yards, or farms.

Collecting materials and using compost locally **reduces greenhouse gas emissions** produced from hauling materials and distributing compost long distances. Additionally, keeping organic materials out of landfills reduces emissions of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.

Compost enhances soil quality by adding organic matter, providing slow-release plant nutrients, increasing water infiltration and retention, reducing soil erosion, and helping **remediate contaminated soils**. Compost can be used to help **revegetate** disturbed land and to **manage stormwater runoff**. Compost use also **sequesters carbon** in the soil – one of the many ways that composting combats climate change.

Social

Community composting **engages and empowers** the community. Community composting programs are scaled to meet the needs of the community and can fill composting **service access gaps**. They also serve as **green spaces and educational sites** where people can learn how to compost, grow nutrient-rich food, reconnect to the food system, and spend time outside. Many community composters **engage young people** and provide **job training**. Community composting programs provide opportunities to volunteer, gather as a community, and work together on a common cause.

By participating in and supporting community composting, communities can gain a new perspective in which organic materials are a valuable resource rather than a waste product and can use that resource to build local soil health and grow local food. Local food helps **address food insecurity** and gaps in food access, especially by providing nutrient-rich fresh produce. Community composting brings skills, knowledge, and access to compost to communities, building resiliency in the community and in local food and waste management systems.

Economic

Community composting creates **economic opportunities**. Community composting empowers individuals, businesses, and institutions to collect organic materials formerly considered “waste” and repurpose them as a community resource. The composting industry sustains [more jobs on a per-ton basis than landfilling or incineration \(pdf\)](#) (17.3 MB). Many community composters and haulers are **small business entrepreneurs**, providing **green jobs** in their local communities.

When compost is produced and used locally, the dollars and resources that go into the process stay local, benefitting the community that provided the organic materials to be composted. Local compost is used to grow local food, supporting other small businesses and a **resilient food system**. Community composting sites provide space for **education and job training**, building skills and capacity to grow the green economy.

¹Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency