

# Compost: Training in the Production and Utilization of Compost In Florida

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## Background Information

Compost can be beneficial to cropping systems such as vegetables, fruit trees, and nursery crops; used to replace soil removed with nursery trees and sod; applied as a mulch or used as all or part of potting media. An additional benefit of compost can be disease suppression.

Research is demonstrating that production of these "Tailor-made" composts requires a high level of knowledge of the composting process.

From the urban viewpoint, compost production represents a safe disposal method for thousands of tons of waste materials produced every year, but there are few qualified technical support personnel who have knowledge of compost production and use.

Compost is a dynamic system which makes recommendations for its use more complicated than standard fertilizer. This lack of knowledge by agricultural professionals results in mistakes and problems with compost production and use.

## Objectives

- Extension agents, NRCS conservationists, and trainer farmers, will be able to learn composting principles and promote the improvement of soil physical, chemical and biological properties by the correct use of composts.
- Increase communication and personal interaction between representatives of the diverse communities.

## Materials and Methods

- Two training programs (February 12 and March 6, 2002)
- Each training sessions will accommodate 125 people and will last 8 hours
- The first section will be spent in lectures and second a hand-on training

## Who was Invited?

- Florida Organic Growers (FOG)
- Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association (FFVA)
- Florida Cooperative Extension Service
- Florida Organic Recycling Association (FORA)
- Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## Lecture Topics

- Introductions - Dr. Monica Ozores-Hampton
- Sustainable Agriculture and Compost - Dr. Cass Gardner
- Why to use Compost - Dr Nancy Roe
- Composted MSW as Mulches for Citrus Planting - Dr. James Graham
- Use of Urban Waste Compost in Ornamental Container Production - Dr. Kimberly Moore

- Evaluation of Compost for Microbial Activity and Enhanced Quality of Bermudagrass Golf Courses Greens - Dr. Datnoff Lawrence
- Use of Compost in Vegetables Production System - Dr. Nancy Roe
- Nutritional Benefits of Compost - Dr. Peter Stoffella
- Composting Biology and Core Principles - Dr. Nancy Roe
- Composting Technologies - Dr. Monica Ozores-Hampton
- Florida Regulations, DERM. - Francine Royal
- Safety - Odor – Fire - Mr. Patrick Byers
- Feedstock(s) Types and Recipes - Dr. George Fitzpatrick
- Compost Quality and Testing - Dr. Monica Ozores-Hampton
- Compost Marketing - Mike Litvany

### **Hands-on Training at Farming Systems Researcher**

- Compost Facility (Palm Beach Solid Waste Authority)
- Compost Spreading Demonstration - Dr. Nancy Roe
- Composting Temperature Reading and Record Keeping - Dr. Nancy Roe
- Composting Feedstock(s) Types and Recipes - Dr. Monica Ozores-Hampton
- Compost Maturity - Drs. Nancy Roe and Monica Ozores-Hampton
- Compost Utilization in Vegetable Production - Drs. Nancy Roe and Monica Ozores-Hampton

### **Training Materials**

- Notebook
- Books
- Field trips

### **Training Evaluations**

- Pre-test
- Post-test
- Four months later

#### **Results from 2001 Training at TREC, Homestead**

	Pre-Test		Post-Test
1	90%	13	100%
3	80%	4	80%
3	70%	2	70%
1	60%	1	50%
2	50%		
7	40%		
1	20%		
1	10%		
0	0%		

Number of People

January: 17

March: 12

Total: 29

### **Conclusions**

- The need for a composting school is real.
- This program has the potential to increase compost production and use, as a component of sustainable horticultural production systems in Florida.