Composting Food Scraps

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For 25 years, MES has maintained and operated the compost facility in Prince George’s County.

Traditionally, composting 40-60,000 tons of yard trim per year using the open windrow model.

As of May 2013, the site started composting with food scraps using Gore Cover technology with a 3 heap pilot system.

Avg. of 8,000 tons food residuals is composted each year. (Currently)
Open Windrow Model: Tried and True

- Current yard trim composting utilizes 52 acers of paved blacktop divided into 3 areas.
- From raw materials to finished product takes approx. 6 to 8 months.
- Requires a specialized machine to turn the windrows minimum of once a week.
- When product is ready for screening, the rows are pushed together or “consolidated” and the open pad space is used to “lay out” the material to dry.
- This model can dramatically effected by ambient temperatures and weather conditions.
Gore Cover Model: New and Improved

- Using the Gore system, the entire composting operation can be consolidated into a 1/3 of the blacktop space.
- Allows the site to accept and process food scraps as a source of nitrogen.
- Covers are designed to trap odor molecules, and keep ambient weather conditions from altering the composting process.
- From start to finish takes only 8-10 weeks.
- Enables landfill diversion for food residuals.
Leaves and brush are hauled to the compost facility year round.

Leaves make up the bulk of our source of carbon.

Grass is hauled for a short time of roughly 20-26 weeks depending on summer time conditions.

Grass is used as a nitrogen source.

Food scraps are hauled to the facility Monday - Friday.

Food scraps are used as a nitrogen source.
Carbon to Nitrogen or C:N

- Only leaves and grass are mixed to form windrows.
- Food, leaves and mulch are mixed to form the Gore heaps.
- A ratio of 27:1 is what we found works well for the open windrow process, using grass and leaves.
- A ratio of 30:1 is what we found works best for the Gore process, composting food and leaves.
- Why the difference?
Why Commercially Acceptable Compostable Products?

- Prince George’s County passed a plastic bag ban that took effect January of 2014 for yard trim.
- To meet the needs of local businesses and the industry, food residuals are accepted in certain compostable bags.
- Along with compostable bags; special PLA products, cardboard, compostable paper products like clam shells and lunch trays are also accepted in the food scraps stream. Only at a C:N of 30:1 will these products properly compost.
Acceptable Compostable Organics

- Fruits and vegetables
- Dairy products - milk, butter, cheese - No containers!
- Bread, pasta, grains (no raw dough)
- Seafood (including shellfish)
- Eggs & Egg shells
- Paper towels, napkins - kitchen only
- Coffee grounds, filters (no “Keurig style” cups)
- Paper plates and cups
- Tea bags - Loose Tea
- Food-soiled newspaper
- Meat (including bones)
- Pizza boxes - clean or “greasy”
- Corrugated fruit & vegetable boxes
- Paper bags (uncoated) with food scraps
- Paper ice cream containers
- Leftovers and spoiled food
- Compostable bags *
- Approved compostable tableware
Acceptable Compostable Products
Building a greener future:

- Quality in is quality out.
- Bad loads are rejected at the haulers expense.
- Zero tolerance policy for contamination.
- Yard trim is only accepted loose or in compostable paper yard bags.
How is a GORE heap built?
Pride and Team work!
Questions and Comments?
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