

Why Does DEQ Promote Compost?

Composting is an important strategy in integrated solid waste management plans for the following reasons:

- Composting reduces the amount of waste going into landfills and the problems associated with decomposition of organic waste.
- Organic materials, such as food and grass clippings, often are the primary source of moisture in the landfilled waste stream. Elimination of compostable waste can result in a reduction of leachate generation at landfills.
- Organic materials are also the source of methane gas, one of the primary air pollutants produced at landfills. Methane is produced in insignificant amounts during the aerobic composting process.

Composting provides a valuable soil amendment with numerous uses, including:

- Reforestation, wetlands restoration and habitat revitalization
- Erosion control and turf remediation
- Disease control for plants and animals
- Bioremediation of contaminated sites
- Remediation of soils contaminated by explosions

It is clear that compost markets extend far beyond landscaping.

Composting is economical:

- There is a growing market for compost in Montana. Besides the traditional use of compost as a garden and yard soil amendment, numerous new and innovative uses of compost have been documented.
- Compost can help in the reclamation of environmentally damaged areas resulting from agriculture, mining, construction and natural causes.
- Cost savings include the deferred cost savings of avoided landfilling and the revenue from sales of finished compost.
- In 2003 the Montana Department of Transportation launched a three-year project researching the use of compost for re-vegetation of areas disturbed in highway construction.
- Mining companies are using compost in the reclamation of mined lands.

These new or expanded uses of compost will continue to strengthen markets. There is a strong potential for growth in compost markets in Montana.