

## USCC Launches Consumer Compost Use Program (CCU)

The **US Composting Council (USCC)** has launched a new program to provide the **retail consumer** with clear and easy to understand information regarding compost use and product assurance standards.

The **Seal of Testing Assurance Program (STA)** was created by the USCC in 2000 and has achieved a high level of success among professional users such as Departments of Transportation, landscape architects, landscapers, soil suppliers and others. The STA is a compost testing, labeling, and information disclosure program that requires compost producers to test their finished product regularly for chemical, physical, and biological attributes. Test results are provided to all potential customers. The new Consumer Compost Use Program (CCU) extends the benefits of the STA to the retail compost user.

The CCU clearly identifies three (3) types of uses for compost. These uses are:

- Trees & Shrubs
- Flower & Vegetable Gardens
- Lawn

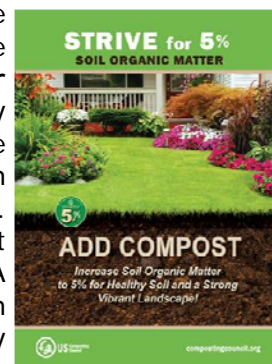
Each compost use classification is represented by easily interpreted icons that reflect the compost's use(s). Only compost producers participating in the STA are authorized to use these symbols on their product packaging or in advertisements. The icons are shown below:



The USCC website provides instructions for the proper use of compost in establishing and maintaining each of the three classifications. Visit <http://compostingcouncil.org/compost-use-instructions/> for more information.

In conjunction with the introduction of the CCU, the USCC launched its **"Strive for 5%" campaign.** For many years gardening experts have advised that soils should contain at least 5% organic matter. Strive for 5% is aimed at promoting the use of STA compost to achieve and maintain 5% organic soil content by reminding consumers of the many benefits of compost, including:

- Compost improves soil structure and porosity
- Compost increases moisture infiltration and permeability; reducing bulk density in heavy soils while also improving the moisture holding capacity of light soils
- Compost supplies organic matter
- Compost allows plants to more effectively utilize nutrients, while reducing nutrient loss by leaching
- Compost supplies beneficial microorganisms to soils



STA compost will help you to achieve 5% organic matter efficiently and cost effectively by using compost produced from locally recycled organic materials. STA compost can be purchased at landscape supply centers, nurseries and building supply centers around the country in either bulk or packages. The USCC suggests that consumers buy in bulk whenever possible in order to take advantage of lower pricing.

### National Update on Yard Waste Disposal Bans



Not all the news about **yard waste disposal bans** has been bad since the Florida legislature overturned Governor Crist's veto of HB569 in 2010. Although the Michigan House of Representatives recently passed a bill that would repeal that state's yard waste disposal ban, it must still pass the Senate. The Michigan ban has been in place since 1995 and is widely credited with preserving landfill space, creating jobs, and providing environmental benefits. The ban has many grassroots supporters, as well as the EPA Region 5 office and the USCC.

In other parts of the country, new bans are being proposed. Vermont is looking to add recyclable materials, yard waste and food scraps to a list of items banned from solid waste landfills. Vermont estimates that up to 30 percent of its MSW is organic matter, mostly food waste, with lesser amounts of soiled paper. Because of Vermont's rural nature, a very small fraction of its MSW is yard waste. House Bill 485 would prohibit disposal of yard waste from landfills by July 1, 2016, and all organic materials, including food waste, by July 1, 2020. The bill passed the House in March and now moves to the Senate.

Massachusetts has a longstanding ban against the disposal of yard waste in the landfill. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP) now has slated food waste to be included in its list of materials banned from disposal by 2020. The state's 2010-2020 Solid Waste Master Plan targets 35 percent food waste diversion by 2020 by targeting hotels, convention centers, food waste processors, and large institutions.

To support the 35 percent target, MDEP has proposed programs to support the development of additional hauling and processing capacity. The Department proposes to reduce or remove regulatory barriers to the authorization and operation of facilities that accept source separated organic materials for composting and make targeted grants and loans available. The MDEP anticipates its efforts will produce sufficient infrastructure by 2014. Public hearings were held in December 2011 through January 2012. For additional information visit the MDEP website <http://www.mass.gov/dep/service/regulations/proposed/adpres.pdf>.

### Recycle Florida Today (RFT) Appoints New Chair to Organics Recycling Committee



At the January RFT Board meeting, **Chris Snow**, formerly with Hillsborough County Solid Waste Management and now with Consolidated Resource Recovery (CRR), was voted to be Chair of the Organics Recycling Committee. Since joining CRR, a yard and wood waste recycling company, Chris' entire focus is on organics recycling and he is excited about the opportunity to once again assist RFT to advance FL organics recycling. He plans regular committee calls for statewide discussion and provides members with opportunities for conference topics and to set committee goals.

The first committee conference call under Chris' leadership took place on April 12 with many members in attendance. The agenda included a general discussion of the current status of organics recycling in Florida and upcoming opportunities that include the RFT Annual Conference in June and the USCC Annual Conference to be held in Florida in January 2013.

The Committee wishes to thank outgoing Chair **Jim Reece** of Okaloosa County for his dedicated service during his tenure.

### Capturing Food Waste in the Waste Stream

Communities across FL are exploring the potential to add **food waste (FW) diversion** to their solid waste management programs. Certainly FL's 75 percent recycling goal is one driver of this trend; however, another reason lies in the percent of the total waste stream that is organics.

Once the capture of "low hanging fruit" such as newspaper and aluminum is maximized, decision makers must look for new opportunities for greater diversion in meeting higher recovery goals. Kessler Consulting, Inc. (KCI), the foremost leader in conducting waste composition studies in FL, has found that FW comprises a significant portion of a community's waste stream.

A 2011 study in Polk County, FL found that FW comprises 13.4 percent of commercial waste (13.1 percent of total waste) in that area; a 2010 study in Charleston County, SC found that FW makes up 19.4 percent of all county waste and as much as 27.2 percent of the waste generated by downtown businesses. In most communities, it presents a significant opportunity for increased recycling.



Looking to the future, FW will play an increasingly important role. As trends such as diminishing newspaper readership and reduced packaging continue, the proportion of FW in the waste stream should continue to rise. In 2001 the FLDEP reported that newspaper comprised 5.1 percent of total MSW; by 2010 that percentage had dropped to 4.1 percent, a 20 percent drop. In that same time period, the percentage of FW increased from 5.8 percent to 6.1 percent of total MSW collected in the state. Across the state we currently are recovering only 2 percent of all food waste.

FW collection and composting has already been incorporated into the solid waste management programs of many communities on the West Coast and is contributing to diversion rates over 50 percent. San Francisco's "three cart program" that provides residential curbside FW collection, as well as its commercial program, have helped that City achieve over 75 percent diversion.

### What Is Compostable Food Ware, and Why Use It?

In 2002, standards were developed by the **American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM)** to establish what it means to be a **"biodegradable" plastic**. ASTM is a globally recognized leader in the development and delivery of international voluntary consensus standards. They are used around the world to improve product quality, enhance safety, facilitate market development, and build consumer confidence. To be labeled "biodegradable" (or compostable), products must meet either ASTM D6400 or ASTM D6868 standard.



ASTM D6400 and ASTM D6868 cover biodegradable plastics and products where plastic film is attached to a compostable substrate (ex. paper) and the entire product is designed to be composted in municipal and industrial aerobic composting facilities.

The Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) is a nonprofit organization that promotes the use and recovery of biodegradable materials. BPI promotes a program that certifies ASTM D6400 and D6868 compostability test results on products and licenses manufacturers to use the Compostable Logo on the products and marketing materials. BPI provides a list of certified compostable products and their manufacturers on their website <http://www.bpiworld.org/BPI-Public/Approved/1.html>.

Although many suppliers sell certified compostable food ware, the market for these products is not yet mature, so pricing tends to be slightly higher than for traditional products. So why should an event planner or food service provider make the switch?

Making the switch to compostable food ware is part of environmental preferable purchasing and can be a key element in a green marketing plan. More and more, consumers are choosing green vendors over others. Using compostable food ware makes food waste collection easier and less contaminated, producing higher quality compost. Perhaps just as important, recycling food ware can lower disposal fees.

### Corporate Sustainability Drives Food Waste Recovery

Increasingly, **companies are embracing sustainability** as an opportunity to gain competitive advantage. Familiar names such as Nestle Foods, Intel, Publix Super Markets, and Walmart have made sustainability a core focus of their operations. Here in Florida, Publix and WalMart stores have implemented food waste recovery programs as part of their efforts.

Publix has partnered with Waste Management (WM) to have produce, bakery, and floral materials collected from 40+ stores in Southeastern Florida and transported to WM's new aerated composting facility in Okeechobee. WM mixes the materials collected from Publix with yard waste to produce organic compost products. The facility, operated by WM subsidiary Garick LLC, is permitted to process up to 30,000 tons per year. WM has stated it intends to expand organics recycling in Florida.

WalMart follows the EPA's food waste hierarchy that prioritizes 1) food for people, 2) food for animals, 3) food for the land (composting) and lastly, 4) food for disposal. Walmart donates any food suitable for consumption to food banks through the Feeding America program. The company currently recycles inedible fruit, vegetables, and baked goods in nine (9) of its Florida stores. The food waste is collected by Quest Recycling, which collects food for recycling from more than 3,000 WalMart stores nationwide. Quest transports the material to Organic Matters, a commercial food waste recycler, for processing into animal food and soil products for a wide range of agricultural applications.



EPA Food Hierarchy

### Upcoming Events

**Waste Expo**, April 30—May 2, 2012  
Las Vegas Convention Center, NM  
<http://wasteexpo.com/wasteexpo2012/public/enter.aspx>

**Florida Native Plant Society**, May 17—20, 2012  
John R. Trinkle Center, Plant City, FL  
<http://www.fnps.org/pages/conference/>

**RFT 2012 Annual Conference and Exhibit**  
June 3 - 5, 2012,  
Tradewinds Island Resort  
St. Pete Beach, FL  
<http://www.recyclefloridatoday.org/events.html>

**SWANA Florida Sunshine Chapter Summer Conference**, June 24—26, 2012  
Sawgrass Marriott,  
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL  
<http://www.swanafl.org/Default.aspx?pageId=1121960&eventId=379356&EventViewMode=EventDetails>

**FNGLA Annual Convention**, June 29—30, 2012  
Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront  
Jacksonville, FL  
<http://www.fngla.org/events/annual-convention/>

**60th Annual Florida Turfgrass Association Conference & Show**, September 25—28, 2012  
Caribe Royal, Orlando, FL  
<https://www.ftga.org/events>

**FFVA's 69th Annual Convention**, Sept. 18—21, 2012  
The Ritz-Carlton, Naples, FL  
[http://www.ffva.com/iMISpublic/Calendar1/Core/Events/eventdetails.aspx?iKey=CON\\_12](http://www.ffva.com/iMISpublic/Calendar1/Core/Events/eventdetails.aspx?iKey=CON_12)  
[eventdetails.aspx?iKey=CON\\_11](http://www.ffva.com/iMISpublic/Calendar1/Core/Events/eventdetails.aspx?iKey=CON_11)

**USGBC Greenbuild**, Nov. 14-16, 2012  
San Francisco, California  
<http://www.greenbuildexpo.org/Home.aspx>

For more information on FORCE or organics recycling in Florida, please call/visit/email:

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