



Compost

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For government purchasers

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Responsible Purchasing Attributes

- ☑ Air quality
- ☑ Climate change
- ☑ Energy efficiency
- ☑ Recycled content
- ☑ Reduce solid waste
- ☑ Reduce toxic chemicals usage
- ☑ Save water

Benefits of Purchasing

- ☑ Builds healthy soil.
- ☑ Reduces purchases of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizer.
- ☑ Diverts organic materials from landfills.

How to Buy

Washington State Contract [10103](#).

See the Department of Ecology's [compost website](#) for a list of permitted composting facilities that sell bulk compost.

Goal: To provide information on the benefits from composting and using composted materials.

Compost results from the controlled decomposition of resources such as landscape trimmings, grass clippings, and food waste. Grounds maintenance, environmental remediation, and roadside applications are all jobs for which state and local agencies purchase compost.

Compost is a nutrient-rich material with many unique environmental benefits.

Reduces the need for pesticides, herbicides, and synthetic fertilizer: By promoting healthy plants and soil, compost reduces pest problems. Using compost as mulch can dramatically reduce the use of herbicides to suppress weeds.

Because compost releases nutrients over time, it works more efficiently with plant root systems than synthetic fertilizers. All of these chemicals can harm human health and the environment.

Conserves water and stops erosion: Used as mulch around trees and plants, compost conserves water by preventing evaporation. It also prevents erosion by controlling run-off during the rainy season.

Reduces solid waste disposal costs: Composting reduces the amount of organic waste going to landfills. Organic materials make up over 50 percent of all waste disposed of in our state, according to the [Washington Organic Recycling Council](#).

Filters pollution from stormwater: Pesticides, toxic chemicals, and other contaminants such as zinc, bind themselves to compost. These substances are then not washed into our waterways.

Reduces greenhouse gas emissions: Organic waste that ends up in landfills create methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

Leading the Way – Washington Department of Transportation

The Department of Transportation (DOT) is using compost blankets and berms along I-5 to improve the water quality of McAllister Creek, which flows into the Nisqually Delta and Puget Sound.

Compost blankets and berms control erosion from stormwater, capture pollutants, and provide nutrients for plants, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) [stormwater website](#).

DOT has found that using compost to improve water quality is more environmentally beneficial and cost effective than building mechanical separators and retention ponds to do the same job.

DOT used the savings from using compost to monitor the stormwater runoff that feeds into McAllister Creek.



Environmentally Preferable Purchasing

The Department of Ecology offers tools and resources to make environmentally preferable purchasing easier.

Find out about environmentally preferable products, standards and certifications, law and directives, and more at our website:

www.ecy.wa.gov/beyondwaste/epp.html

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Resources

[Building Soil website](#) (includes Compost Amendment Rate calculator)

[Compost, King County](#) Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program

Department of Ecology, [Compost](#)

California EPA, [Compost: Matching Performance Needs with Performance Characteristics](#)

[Soils for Salmon](#), Building Soil Manual

[The U.S. Composting Council](#)

[Washington Organics Recycling Council](#)

Product Performance

Commercial composters in Washington State must have their compost tested to verify that it meets the state [Composting Facility Standards](#) (WAC 173-350-220). These standards cover the operation of compost facilities in an environmentally safe manner, as well as the chemical and physical properties of the product. The finished compost product must also be tested in a certified laboratory.

Local health departments permit many compost facilities for solid waste handling. If you would like to know more about your local composting facility, contact the local health department.

When contracting for ground maintenance with landscapers, specify the use of compost instead of synthetic fertilizer, herbicides, and pesticides. The King County [Compost](#) website contains bid and contract specifications from several projects.

Make Your Own Compost

Building a compost facility at your agency is another option. EPA advises this option to agencies that produce large volumes of organic waste and have adequate space for composting. See EPA’s [Compost and fertilizer made from recovered organic materials](#) Recovered Materials Advisory Notice.

Learn more about onsite food scrap management programs by visiting the Department of Ecology’s compost operation or read [Managing Food Scraps at Institutions and Agencies - A Guide for Washington State](#).

The Washington Organic Recycling Council offers compost facility operator training.



Laws and Directives

RCW 43.19A	Requires all state and local governmental agencies to purchase recycled content products, including compost.
Executive Order 04-01 Reducing PBTs	Calls for agencies to shift to nontoxic, recycled, and remanufactured materials in purchasing and construction. Also calls for agencies to reduce or eliminate waste as in ineffective or improper use of resources and help create markets for recycled content products.
Executive Order 02-03 Sustainable Practices by State Agencies	Directs state agencies to adopt measures to reduce the use of equipment, supplies, and other products that contain persistent, toxic chemicals.
Composting Facility Standards	Composting facilities are regulated according to the solid waste regulations, developed to promote composting while protecting human health and the environment. (WAC 173-350-220)
Chapter 17.15	State agencies are directed to treat pest and weed problems with strategies that must consider human health, ecological impact, feasibility, and cost-effectiveness.

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