



Composting News

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International Compost Awareness Week - May 6-12, 2007

With compost, the possibilities are endless

A healthy, thriving garden begins with healthy soil. For every problem that may arise in your garden, there's a green, organic solution.

For centuries, compost has been known to be a valuable soil amendment that helps to grow healthier plants by strengthening their root structure, controlling disease, reducing the need for chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides and substantially increasing the soil's ability to retain water and nutrients.

"The use of organic compost loosens hard clay soil and saves water because compost holds moisture to the root zone of plants," said Sheila Carlson, of the Greater Cleveland Ecology Association (GCEA).

"The Possibilities are Endless ... Compost!" is the theme of the ninth annual International Compost Awareness Week, which is being recognized May 6-12 in countries around the world. Organized in the U.S. by the Washington, D.C.-based U.S. Composting Council, Compost Awareness Week is sponsored by companies like Coca Cola, Chick-fil-A and Chinet, along with local sponsors like *Composting News*, of Strongsville, Filtrexx International, of Grafton and Paygro, a division of Cleveland-based Garick Corp.

"Composting is an integral part of our drive towards environmental sustainability," said Dr. Stuart Buckner, executive director of the U.S. Composting Council.

According to the U.S. EPA, about 65 percent of the residential trash generated in the country - including paper, yard trimmings, food waste and wood - can be composted, either through back yard composting or through centralized privately or municipally operated composting facilities. Such facilities divert waste from disposal in landfills and into beneficial organic products that are used by farmers, nurseries, landscapers and home owners.

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Composting is a natural aerobic biological process that converts all types of organic matter into stable organic products that can be used in numerous beneficial ways, such as building of healthy soils, control of erosion, recovery of contaminated land, reforestation and wetlands restoration.

Compost has the unique ability to improve the properties of soils and growing media structurally, nutritionally and biologically. Although many equate the benefit of compost use to lush green growth caused by the plant-available nitrogen, the real benefits of using compost are long-term and related to its content of living-organic matter.

In fine-textured clay and clay loam soils, the addition of compost will reduce bulk density, improve workability and porosity and increase its gas and water permeability, thus reducing erosion. The addition of compost may provide greater drought resistance and more efficient water utilization, therefore, the frequency and intensity of irrigation may be reduced.

Compost products contain a considerable variety of macro and micronutrients. Although often seen as a good source of nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium, compost also contains micronutrients essential for plant growth. Since compost contains relatively stable sources of organic matter, these nutrients are supplied in a slow-release form.

Compost also will improve the cation exchange capacity of soils, enabling them to retain nutrients longer. It will also allow crops to more effectively utilize nutrients, while reducing nutrient loss by leaching.

Gardeners can discover the benefits of compost for themselves by visiting compost producers and garden centers in the area.

For example, GCEA, located at 323 Lakeside Avenue, in Cleveland, (216-443-3737) offers a variety of leaf humus and compost products. Urban Organics, at 2934 Sleepy Hollow Road, in Bruckswick Hills. (440-333-7338) produces Sweet Peet, an organic mulch that is certified by the U.S. Composting Council's Seal of Testing Assurance program.

For detailed instructions about how you can make your own compost, visit www.leafecology.org.

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For more information about International Compost Awareness Week, visit the U.S. Composting Council's Web site, at www.compostingcouncil.org