

Technology Brief

Landscape Architectural/Design Specifications for Compost

To date, the largest "paying" market for compost, both in Washington State and nationally, is the horticultural industry. In 1992 it was estimated that five million tons of compost was being utilized by the horticultural industry, which includes the landscape industry, and that markets could grow to 15 million tons per year annually. In the State of Washington, horticultural markets also are the largest paying markets for compost and have a similar growth potential. To access these growing markets, various compost utilization tools have been developed.

Through national funding, some of which was provided by CWC, The Composting Council has developed a series of compost use guidelines that outline instructions relative to the utilization of compost as well as data describing the compost product to specify. These research-based documents have been distributed throughout the United States. In order to further disseminate information and educate end users, the compost use guidelines were developed into the *Field Guide to Compost Use*. This publication condensed data found in the compost use guidelines and honed the information into step-by-step instructions for compost use. The major goal of producing the Field Guide was to provide compost use and purchasing data in an easy to read manner which would allow more wide spread usage. However, to further expand the utilization of this data, it must be provided to individuals and companies that design landscape projects.

A project was completed which modified the data found in both the compost use guidelines and the *Field Guide to Compost Use* to create landscape architecture/design specifications. The main reason for pursuing such a project was because most specifying agencies have not allocated the resources necessary or simply do not have enough background in compost use to manipulate this data



Key Words

Materials: Compost

Technologies: Compost-Use Specifications

Applications: Landscape Architecture & Design

Market Goals: Increase use of compost in landscaping industry

Abstract: Long and short format specifications presented, with technical information and background on the benefits and use of compost in landscaping

into a usable form. Therefore, since specifiers largely control the types of products utilized on landscape and other construction projects, the existing research-based compost data was modified into:

- Compost use specifications that are written in the format in which landscape architects/designers commonly use.
- Specifications which allow landscape architects-designers and other specifiers to "cut and paste" a full specifications package without requiring in-depth compost knowledge.
- Specifications which promote and illustrate compost as an equal or alternative to other typical landscape products (e.g. peat based products).

The development of the Landscape Architecture Design Specifications for Compost Use involved individuals from the compost and landscape industries as well as academia. The process included members of The Composting Council, the American Society of Landscape Architects

(ASLA), and the Association of Professional Landscape Designers (APLD).

The first step of the process entailed a national data search to identify and obtain standard landscape architect specifications (formats). Specifications formats were also provided by ARCOM Master Systems and the National Institute of Building Sciences, both of which market and disseminate standard landscape specifications throughout the landscape and construction industries. Both short and long specification formats were obtained, and once the two standard formats were chosen, the process of infusing compost use data previously gathered through the development of the compost use guidelines and the *Field Guide to Compost Use* ensued. Where additional technical data was necessary, further data collection was completed. Long and short landscape architect specifications for compost use were developed for compost used as:

- a soil amendment for planting beds
- tree and shrub backfill mix component
- soil amendment for turf establishment/ renovation
- landscape mulch
- soil mulch for erosion control

Throughout the development process, a select group within The Composting Council's Market Development Committee, as well as a national review team of landscape architects and designers, provided input into the specifications package. Permission was then obtained to use a large portion of the text developed for the *Field Guide to Compost Use* within the planned stand alone landscape architect specifications document. The addition of data pertaining to the benefits of compost use, quality related issues, etc. was included in the overall package in order to provide the landscape architecture/design industry with more technical information and background regarding the use of compost.

Dissemination of the landscape architecture/design

specifications package will be managed by The Composting Council which have the ability to reproduce and sell the package throughout the landscape and composting industry. Press releases and a sample of the completed package were provided to the ASLA and the APLD in order to promote the package within the landscape industry. The specifications package was also be promoted at the ASLA's National Conference in November 1997 in Atlanta during a poster session.

To further ensure wide distribution and usage of the landscape architect/designer specifications for compost, ARCOM Master Systems and the National Institute of Building Sciences were engaged and their specifications packages reviewed. Early in the process, these two groups agreed that compost related data was needed within their current specifications packages in order to keep up with current landscape trends. As such, they solicited the project team to review and upgrade their current specifications package to include our technical compost use information. All of the feedback provided to ARCOM Master System and the National Institute of Building Sciences was reviewed and approved by The Composting Council's Market Development Committee.

By providing the industry with specifications that are written in the language/format used by landscape architects/designers, it will allow easy incorporation into their project specifications, thereby removing any barriers regarding the specification of compost. By providing a generic specification which can be modified as deemed appropriate in different geographical regions under various conditions (e.g. climatic, soil), the specifiers will have the ability to adapt the information to meet their specific requirements.

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For More Information

For a copy of the report, *Development of Landscape Architect Specifications for Compost Utilization (CM-97-2)*, use the CWC Publication Order Form. If you want more information call CWC at: (206) 443-7746 or email info@cw.org, visit the CWC Internet Website at www.cwc.org.

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CWC is a division of the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region, 2200 Alaskan Way, Suite 460, Seattle, Washington, 98121.