One Person’s Trash is... another’s black gold.

Every year, Michigan landfills and trash incinerators receive 16 MILLION TONS of garbage.

COMPOST: Impacts More Than You Think

Composting is the aerobic decomposition of organic materials by microorganisms. It transforms raw materials—such as leaves, grass clippings, garden trimmings, food scraps, animal manure, and agricultural residues—into compost, a valuable earthy-smelling soil conditioner, teeming with life.

>50% of typical municipal garbage set out at the curb is compostable.

21% is food scraps alone

15% paper/paperboard

8% yard trimmings (banned from disposal in MI)

8% wood waste

What Can You Do?

Policies to Consider

- Encourage a decentralized composting infrastructure
- Establish a local and state food recovery goal
- Ensure small-scale operators can compete
- Support composter training programs
- Require compost-amended soil for development
- Institute pay-as-you-throw trash fees
- Implement a healthy and green infrastructure initiative
- Provide grants, loans, and technical assistance to compost projects
- Establish performance-based standards for compost sites

To learn more, visit: ils.org/compost-impacts
Composting creates jobs.

Jobs are sustained in each stage of the organics recovery cycle.

PRODUCT UTILIZATION

On a per-ton basis, making compost alone, employs 2x more workers than landfills and 4x more than incinerators.

Per 10,000 Tons Waste/Year Jobs Sustained

- Incineration
- Landfilling
- Manufacturing Compost

Using Compost in Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure uses compost in rain gardens, green roofs, bioswales, vegetated retaining walls, and on steep highway embankments to control soil erosion and storm water. Using compost in green infrastructure creates even more jobs.

PRODUCT GENERATION

When added to soil, compost can filter out urban stormwater pollutants by an astounding 60-95%.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE SOIL

COMPOST

Improves biological, chemical, and physical characteristics of soil.

- Protects against soil desertification and soil erosion
- Enhances plant disease suppression
- Increases resilience to floods and droughts
- Increases soil fertility
- Reduces need for chemicals
- Converts nitrogen into a more stable and less mobile form and phosphorus into a less soluble form
- Increases microbial activity
- Improves water retention
- Improves soil structure
- Adds humus, keeping soil particles stuck together
- Improves ability to store nutrients (such as cation exchange capacity)

Compost helps reduce stormwater runoff because it can hold ~5x its weight in water.

Compost serves as a filter and sponge. It immobilizes and degrades pollutants, improving water quality.

SOURCES:
- Brenda Platt, Eric Lombardi, and David Ciplet, Stop Trashing the Climate, Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR), 2008.
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- Bobby Bell and Brenda Platt, Building Healthy Soils with Compost to Protect Watersheds, Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR), June 2014.