



## LANDSCAPING APPLICATIONS FOR COMPOST



Composted products can rehabilitate depleted soils

The Michigan **Landscape for the Lakes** campaign promotes sustainable landscaping, construction, and land management practices by increasing the use of compost to protect and enhance soil function. The program aims to raise awareness about the value of compost and share best practices for the application of compost-based products and systems to create functional landscapes which also provide environmental benefit.

Campaign educational resources will provide information on the use of compost to:

- 1) improve soil health and structure and nutrient retention;
- 2) reduce soil erosion; and
- 3) better manage stormwater run-off and improve water quality in Michigan rivers and stream and ultimately the Great Lakes.

Establishing landscapes with “lake friendly”, healthy soils is key to successful turf and plant establishment, as well as long-term plant growth. The inclusion and maintenance of appropriate and necessary levels of organic matter in soils is key to the creation of fertile, healthy soils. Compost is the least expensive and most consistent form of stabilized organic matter available to the Michigan marketplace. Compost is a uniquely versatile product which can improve soils chemically, physically, and biologically while also providing the ability to capture many, and breakdown certain, contaminants.

Compost is rich in organic matter and microbial populations, both of which are essential components to healthy and productive soils. Composted products can rehabilitate depleted soils, enrich planting mixes, and enhance the growth of turf and ornamental plant species. Furthermore, the composting process, essentially “pasteurizes” the end product, eliminating viable weed seeds and plant pathogens.

### AMENDING TOPSOILS WITH COMPOST

- Restores soil water infiltration and storage capacities.
- Decreases surface water runoff and erosion.
- Traps sediments, heavy metals and excess nutrients; and biodegrades certain chemical contaminants.
- Rebuilds the beneficial soil life that fights pests and disease, and supplies plants with nutrients and water.
- Improves plant health, with reduced need for additional water, fertilizers and pesticides.
- Aids deep plant root growth and vigorous vegetative cover. Creating healthy soils using compost in existing soils is less expensive than hauling out old soil only to haul in new soil.

**CONSERVES WATER** Compost-based products can retain and hold large quantities of water, thus, reducing erosion and irrigation required on the site while capturing more storm water.

**REDUCES WASTE** The addition of compost facilitates the quick establishment of plant growth reducing the need for construction materials like the petroleum-based plastic used in silt fence. Compost applications in landscaping do not have to be removed and discarded after use and are in fact beneficial in the long term.



**Strive for 5% organic matter in your landscaping soils, before planting, and reap the long-term rewards!**



An example of turf maintenance

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- Garden bed preparation (edible and ornamental) – Incorporating compost during soil preparation
- Tree and shrub establishment – Amending backfill mixes and/or incorporating compost during soil preparation
- Turf establishment – Incorporating compost during soil preparation
- Turf maintenance – Applying compost to the surface as top dressing
- Raised bed, rooftop garden, rain garden, bioretention system media component - Incorporating compost during soil preparation

### CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS FOR COMPOST

Construction and development activities can strip away native soil and vegetation resulting in compacted soils that inhibit plant growth and water retention. Using compost to amend topsoil and assure 5% organic matter in the soil mixture is key to plant growth process. Compost amended soil will reestablish hydrologic function, due in large part to improved soil aggregation and water holding capacity. This in turn allows for stormwater capture, reduced erosion, and deep rooting of plants.