Composting

Programs focused on the diversion of organic materials from the waste stream

Indicators

Amount of organic materials diverted from the waste stream in 2003/2004 - 412.7 tons

Amount of mulch used by the campus from the compost site in 2003/2004 - 564 cubic yards

Financial savings in 2003/2004 from using composted material - $7,896

Recycling and re-use of organic material on campus has been a common practice at NC State for nearly 20 years. Currently, all of the yard waste collected on campus is taken to the Inwood Road Compost Site off of Lake Wheeler Road. Each year the material is ground into mulch and then sits to cure for a year before use. When the mulch is ready, the Grounds Management Department uses it for their planting projects on campus, saving the university nearly $8,000 in 2003/2004 alone.

Recently, the compost site obtained approval for a Level 4 Permit which allows for pre and post-consumer food waste, yard waste, wood and paper products, manures and non-hazardous animal bedding, and vegetative agricultural waste. Future plans for the site include partnering with the Compost Training Facility to develop a teaching and demonstration area for students as well as other members of the community. This will also allow for many research and extension opportunities.

NC State mulch dresses a bed on campus

A comprehensive composting program helps decrease waste, saves money and resources and creates positive educational opportunities. Since food alone typically makes up 10% of the waste stream, a composting program for food waste would significantly decrease the amount of solid waste that NC State sends to the landfill.

Policy

'Agencies that operate or contract for the operation of food service establishments, such as snack bars, cafeterias, dining halls, etc., are encouraged to implement programs to recover and recycle leftover food when practicable and feasible.'
- North Carolina Governor Hunt's Executive Order 156

Spotlight on Vermicomposting

Rhonda Sherman is the Director of the Compost Training Facility at NC State. She specializes in solid waste management, particularly in composting and vermicomposting. Her work includes publications as well as educational and technical program assistance.

"*Vermicomposting* is the process of turning organic debris into worm castings." It is estimated that North Carolina buries or burns 420,000 tons of food every year. Using worms to decompose food waste offers several advantages including: reducing garbage disposal costs; producing less odor and pests; saving the water and electricity disposals use; and producing a free, high-quality soil amendment (compost). "When worm compost is added to soil, it boosts the nutrients available to plants and enhances soil structure and drainage." Vermicomposting also requires very little space, labor and maintenance. (W*orms Can Recycle Your Garbage*- Sherman, 1996)

For more info visit:
Vermicomposting Resources

For more information related to composting on campus contact:

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