

Minnesota IN COMMON



34th Annual MASLA Awards Banquet

McNamara Alumni Center
East Bank Campus, University of Minnesota
Thursday, March 27th

The awards banquet is an excellent chance to meet new and old friends and colleagues and to see the recently-completed Alumni Center and Gateway Plaza by architect Antoine Predock, KKE Architects and landscape architects LHB Engineers and Architects. You will also see award-winning projects, learn about current projects at the University of Minnesota, and see the work of CALA students and faculty. For information about McNamara Alumni Center, go to:

<http://www.alumnicenter.umn.edu/>

For additional information contact:

Andrew Caddock, Director of Awards and Banquet
acaddock@closelandarch.com

You are cordially invited to attend the

MASLA

34th Annual Awards Banquet
on
Thursday, March 27th
at the
**University of Minnesota
McNamara Alumni Center**

6:00pm each table
award-winning projects on display

7:30pm dinner and awards program

Special Keynote Speaker to be announced
Watch the MASLA Website for more information!

Complimentary parking available.
See reverse for directions

For more information, see
<http://www.masla.org>
<http://www.alumnicenter.umn.edu/>

Please RSVP by March 18th

34th annual AWARDS

The McNamara Alumni Center, 200 Oak St. SE, is located on the East Bank of the University of Minnesota Minneapolis campus across University Avenue from Williams Arena.

Complimentary parking at the University Avenue Parking Ramp is included with paid admission to the Awards Banquet. An underground tunnel connects the Center to the University Avenue Parking Ramp. The ramp is located north west of the Center. Note: University Avenue is a one way street heading east.

A circular driveway on Oak Street is available for drop-offs. Two handicapped parking spaces are available at the Center's entrance on Oak Street.

Are YOU Specifying Minnesota Compost Yet?

Al Rattie and Ron Alexander, R. Alexander Associates, Inc.

This is the first in a series of articles that will be published about the Minnesota commercial composting industry, and the strong interest on the part of the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance (MOEA) in helping the State to remove larger volumes of organic residuals from the waste stream. The MOEA knows that these organic residuals can be recycled into high quality compost products, and used in place of non-renewable, or imported products.

In an effort to expand compost markets, the MOEA has sponsored a two-year project, which began in December at the Minnesota Green Expo in Minneapolis. The project team, consisting of the MOEA, the United States Composting Council (USCC), Minnesota commercial composters and R. Alexander Associates, Inc. (project managers), met to develop ideas about how to most effectively and efficiently spread the word about the many benefits; environmental, agronomic and financial, that are realized when compost is specified and used in place of topsoil or peat moss. It was pretty clear to those at the meeting that the landscape architect could play a large role in making this happen quickly, by specifying compost for landscape projects. The subsequent articles will describe the uses of compost in different landscape applications and help you participate in this important process.

Compost provides many benefits to the soil, plants, environment, and to the ‘pocketbook’ of the user. It is readily available in most parts of the state and should be considered in every project for which you write specifications. Let’s look at some basic information about compost as an introduction to this topic.

What is Compost?

Compost is the end product resulting from the controlled biological decomposition of organic material. This organic material is broken down and sanitized through the generation of heat, resulting from the intense activity of billions of microbes growing and reproducing. Good quality compost is stabilized to the point where it is beneficial to plant growth and bears little physical resemblance to the organic residuals from which it came. Compostable organic residuals may include yard trimmings, biosolids, manure, food and other related feedstocks. Compost is used primarily for its soil conditioning properties, but can also provide significant levels of plant nutrients, both macro and micro, since it is typically applied in relatively large quantities.

How is Compost Produced?

All compost, regardless of the original organic feedstock, is produced through the activity of aerobic (oxygen requiring) microorganisms. These “bugs” need oxygen, moisture and food in order to grow and multiply. Their activity generates heat, water vapor and carbon dioxide as they transform raw organic residuals into a stable soil conditioner. The natural decomposition process is greatly accelerated when these resources are maintained at optimal levels, by controlling the feedstock “recipe” and properly managing the daily activities of the composting process.

The US EPA has established public health and safety standards that facilities composting biosolids, and other residuals from the waste stream, must meet in order to be approved for general distribution. The state of Minnesota also has a set of standards that must be met. These product safety “checks and balances” assure you that not only will you have a very safe product, but also have one that will be effective for a variety of soil conditioning uses.

Compost Benefits and Applications

The use of compost, as previously mentioned, can provide many benefits. It improves the physical, chemical and biological properties of the soil and media to which it is blended. Some of these benefits are listed in the table below (these will be discussed in more detail in future articles).

Benefits of Compost Use

- Improves the soil structure, porosity, and bulk density
 - creating a better plant root environment
- Increases moisture infiltration and permeability of heavy soils
 - improving drainage and reducing erosion and runoff
- Improves the moisture holding capacity of light soils
 - reducing water loss and nutrient leaching and helping to conserve water
- Improves and stabilizes soil pH
 - creating a better environment for overall plant health
- Improves cation exchange capacity (CEC) of soils
 - improving their ability to retain nutrients for plant use
- Supplies a variety of macro and micro nutrients
 - reducing initial fertilizer needs in some applications
- Supplies significant quantities of organic matter
 - the essence of healthy soil
- Supplies beneficial microorganisms to the soil
 - improving nutrient uptake and suppressing certain soil-borne diseases
- Binds and degrades specific pollutants
 - a new, pollution reducing benefit

Compost can be used 'on' the soil surface as a turf topdressing, mulch or an erosion control product, or 'in' the soil as part of a planter mix or soil amendment. Contact Al Rattie via e-mail at Turflife@aol.com or at 215-258-5259 to get a list of Minnesota composters and to learn more about the Minnesota Compost Initiative, "Promoting Compost Market Development and Mainstream Product Status".

Upcoming articles will discuss... Benefits of Compost Use, Landscape Applications for Compost, Erosion Control Applications for Compost, and the New NPDES requirements, Blending Compost to Create Customized Landscaping Soils, the USCC STA program and more.....

Editor's Note:

The web site of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provides a broad overview of the usefulness of municipal compost including several articles on specific use issues. Check it out at:

<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/compost/>



CALA Continuing Education Opportunities

The Spring Session of CALA's Continuing Professional Studies Program runs through May. There are several classes left that could earn continuing education credits.

Check out what's available at their website:

<http://www.cala.umn.edu/cps/>