

T N L A GREEN

M A G Z I N E

MARCH 2004



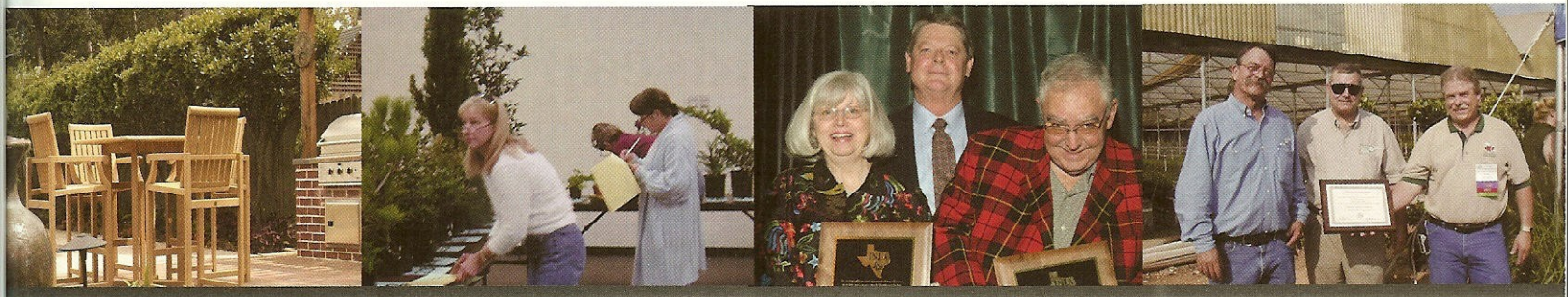
RECOGNIZING COURT NLAMEMBERSHIP RECOGNIZING



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PSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Austin, Texas
Permit No. 645

Compost



Ron Alexander

US COMPOSTING
COUNCIL

In order to help compost become a mainstream consumer product, the composting industry needed to accomplish several things, including:

- Raise the professionalism of the composting industry
- Produce consistently high quality products, and
- Assist end users in purchasing appropriate products for their needs.

The USCC developed the Seal of Testing Assurance (STA) Program to help facilitate this process. The STA Program began in 2000, with financial assistance provided by the US Environmental Protection Agency. The Program is seen by many as the first step towards the establishment of national compost standards. In its current form, the STA Program is a compost testing and information disclosure program that uses uniform testing and sampling protocols that were developed through a consensus of leading compost research scientists across the nation. These test methods and sampling procedures are outlined in the USCC's Test Methods for the Evaluation of Composting and Compost (TMECC). Some of these

tests are compost specific, and did not formally exist prior to the TMECC being completed. More information on this can be found on the USCC website at: <http://www.compostingcouncil.org>.

The goal of the USCC, and its STA Program, is to allow compost buyers to more easily purchase the products they desire or require for a particular project. It is also a goal to allow buyers (and specifiers) to more systematically compare compost products, allowing for an educated purchasing decision process like that used in purchasing any other product for professional or home use.

Both goals are achieved through the use of a uniform product label, which allows for easy comparison between products. This label contains test analyses data, end use instructions and an ingredient statement, thereby providing the information required to make educated purchasing decisions, which promotes successful use of compost 'in the field'.

Something even more important to the composting industry itself is that the

This is the second article in a series published by the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association to help its membership become more aware of the many uses of commercial compost products. In this article we will explain the US Composting Councils' Seal ("USCC") of Testing Assurance Program ("STA") and its significance and impact for the landscape and nursery industry in Texas.

overall program is encouraging needed consistency within the composting industry – consistency in product sampling, lab testing methodologies and product labeling. Only through this type of industry wide consistency will the Green Industry come to rely upon the Composting Industry as a respected and on-going supplier of materials.

Therefore, the success of the STA Program goes far beyond the success of any individual composter. It works towards the goal of bringing necessary consistency to the Composting Industry. This, in turn, benefits the Green Industry, since it can now depend on the Composting Industry to be a mainstream supplier.

The State of Texas has embraced the STA Program. The Texas Department of Transportation (TX DOT), thanks to efforts of Scott McCoy, TCEQ, and Barrie Cogburn, TX DOT, has become the largest public user of compost in the nation. Texas has more STA Program certified composting facilities than any other state in the US. At last count, 20 Texas composters and 34 compost products participated in the STA program.

Many articles have been written that illustrate the success that TX DOT has had with compost used both as a soil amendment and erosion control material. We'll explore these uses in more detail in future articles. With all of its success in using compost, TX DOT knew that receiving and using poor quality composts could ruin the success of their program. Having already established their compost specifications, TX DOT saw the STA Program as a way to assist in implementing the use of its specifications throughout Texas.

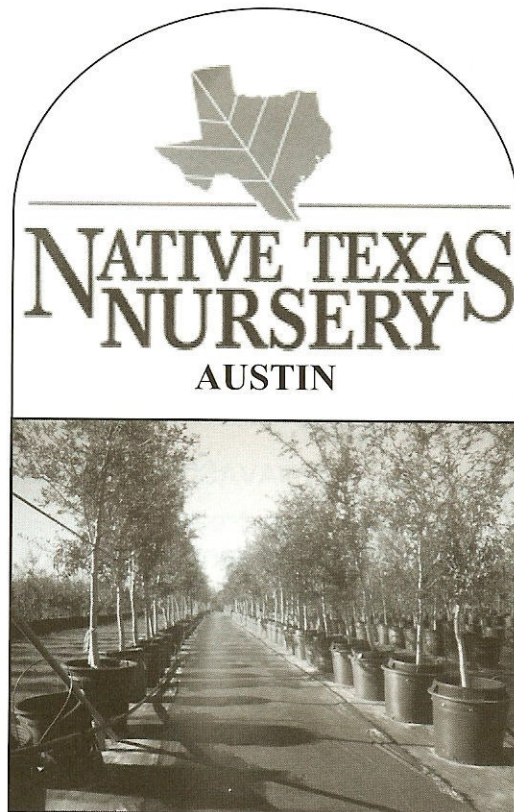
Because the program requires uniform and on-going testing of compost products and uniform product labeling, it provided a means for TX DOT project engineers to evaluate potential compost products for their specific projects, as well as inform TX DOT field inspectors of the particular characteristics possessed by the products delivered to a project site.

There is both a cost and time commitment required to participate in the STA program. Composters must test their

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