

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE/DESIGN SPECIFICATIONS FOR COMPOST USE

Compost production has grown as a well accepted method to manage many agricultural, industrial, and municipal by-products. Market research conducted by Batelle in 1992 showed that approximately nine million tons of compost per year were being produced and that 51 million tons could be produced annually by the end of the century. Whether this quantity of compost is produced or not will be largely based on economic criteria regarding composting as a waste management technique as well as development of compost markets. To date the largest "paying" market for compost nationally is the horticultural industry. In 1992 it was estimated that five million tons of compost were being utilized by the horticultural industry, which includes the landscaping industry, and that markets could grow to 15 million tons per year annually. In the State of Washington, horticultural markets also are the largest paying markets for compost and have a similar growth potential.

In King County for example, landscapers use approximately 80 percent of the compost marketed. Washington State market studies, as well as studies completed throughout the United States, have shown that a series of simple steps can be taken to improve markets for compost:

- Illustrate how compost should be used properly
- Assist end users to identify the type of product they should utilize for a specific application
- Develop specifications for the use of compost products
- Assist compost manufacturers to identify product related requirements of end user groups.

Over the past several years, The Composting Council has sought funding to bridge those technical and communication gaps. Through national funding, some of which was provided by The Clean Washington Center, The Composting Council has developed a series of compost use guidelines which outline instructions relative to the utilization of compost as well as data describing the compost product to specify. These research based documents have been distributed throughout the United States. In order to further disseminate information and educate end users, the compost use guidelines were developed into the *Field Guide to Compost Use*. This publication condensed data found in the compost use guidelines and honed the information into step-by-step instructions for compost use. The major goal of producing the *Field Guide to Compost Use* was to provide compost use and purchasing data in an easy to read manner which would allow more wide spread usage. However, to further expand the utilization of this data, it must be provided to individuals and companies which design landscape projects.

The data found in both the compost use guidelines and the *Field Guide to Compost Use* can be modified by specifiers (e.g. landscape architects, purchasing agents, DOT, etc.) to create landscape architecture/design specifications. However, history has shown that this typically does not occur. Specifying agencies have not allocated the resources or simply do not have enough background in compost use to manipulate this data into a usable form. Therefore, since specifiers greatly impact which types of products are utilized on landscape and other construction projects, it has been necessary to modify the existing compost use data into:

- Compost use specifications which are written in the format in which landscape architects/designers commonly use
- Specifications which allow landscape architects/designers and other specifiers to "cut and paste" a full specifications package without requiring extensive knowledge regarding compost use
- Specifications which promote and illustrate compost as an equal or alternative to other typical landscape products (e.g. peat based products)

By providing the industry with specifications which are written in the language/format used by landscape architects/designers, it will allow easy incorporation into their project specifications, thereby removing any barriers regarding the specification of compost. By providing a generic specification which can be modified as deemed appropriate in different geographical regions under various conditions (e.g. climatic, soil), the specifiers will have the ability to adapt the generic information to meet their specific requirements. The other added benefit of creating this information is that it can easily be provided to state agencies, making it much simpler for them to specify and procure compost.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The development of the Landscape Architecture/Design Specifications for Compost Use involved a diverse group of individuals from the compost and landscape industries as well as academia. The process not only included members of The Composting Council, but also members of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and the Association of Professional Landscape Designers (APLD).

The first step of the process entailed a national data search to identify and obtain standard landscape architect specifications (formats). Standard specifications were obtained by soliciting members and friends of The Composting Council who have had interaction with landscape architects/designers as well as by directly contacting landscape architects/designers and their trade associations, and academics involved in the industry. Specifications formats were also provided by ARCOM Master Systems and the National Institute of Building Sciences, both of which market and disseminate standard landscape specifications throughout the design industry. Both short and long specification formats were obtained, and the two most common formats were chosen to utilize. In order to obtain industry consensus, the format related information was presented at one of The Composting Council's Market Development Committee meetings in order to obtain approval of and comments on the format choices.

Once the two standard formats were chosen, the process of infusing compost use data previously gathered through the development of the compost use guidelines and the *Field Guide to Compost Use* ensued. Long and short landscape architect specifications for compost use were developed for compost used as:

- a soil amendment for planting beds
- tree and shrub backfill mix component
- soil amendment for turf establishment/renovation
- landscape mulch
- soil mulch for erosion control

As the long and short specifications were developed, they were reviewed, commented on, upgraded, and finalized by a select group within The Composting Council's Market Development Committee. Permission was then obtained to use a large portion of the text developed for the *Field Guide to Compost Use* within the planned stand alone landscape architect specifications document. The addition of data pertaining to the benefits of compost use, quality related issues, etc. was included in the overall package in order to provide the landscape architecture/design industry with more technical information and background regarding the use of compost. Once completed, the stand alone specifications package was forwarded to a 40 person review team of landscape architects and designers throughout the Country for their review and comment. Over 40 percent of the review team (17 firms) responded with comments or overall approval. The landscape architect/designer review team was developed by obtaining input from the President of the Washington Chapter of the ASLA, the President of the APLD, and by obtaining names of potential firms from The Composting Council members. Extensive revisions were not required within the landscape architecture/design specifications package as many of the firms using compost were pleased with the package and felt it was very helpful.

SPECIFICATION DISSEMINATION/PROMOTION

Dissemination of the landscape architecture/design specifications package will be managed by The Composting Council. They are currently reproducing and marketing the package throughout the landscape and composting industry. Press releases and a sample of the completed package were provided to the ASLA and the APLD in order to promote the package within the landscape industry. The specifications package was also promoted at the ASLA's National Conference in November 1997 in Atlanta during a poster session. Parties interested in ordering the package should contact The Composting Council directly.

To ensure wide distribution and usage of the landscape architect specifications for compost, several entities were engaged to provide editorial review of the specifications as well as assist in dissemination. These groups included the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Association of Professional Landscape Designers, ARCOM Master Systems, and the National Institute of Building Sciences. The latter two entities develop and disseminate standard landscape specifications to the specifying industry. Early in the process, these two groups agreed that compost related data was needed within their current specifications packages in order to keep up with current landscape trends. As such, they not only agreed to become involved in a review capacity, but also solicited the project team to review and upgrade their current specifications package to include our technical compost use information. All of the feedback provided to ARCOM Master System and the National Institute of Building Sciences was reviewed and

approved by The Composting Council's Market Development Committee. Both entities are currently reviewing our comments and are in the process of upgrading their specifications package.

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