



# What's Cooking!

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**TOP OF THE HEAP**

My term on the Board ends this year after five years and three as president. I want to thank all of you who have been actively involved in our Association; it never ceases to amaze me when people are so generous as to volunteer their time for a worthy cause. It has truly been an honor to work with you.

We have some good news. The state of Delaware has awarded us grant funds through the Warrington Foundation to purchase and distribute educational materials. The grant also pays for some compost use demonstrations, and will also include a survey of municipal compost activities. Thanks to Marshall Budin and Janet Manchester at DNREC for their assistance in the grant process.

Recently, some of our Association members had a chance to attend a MACREDO (Mid-Atlantic Consortium of Recycling and Economic Development Officials) meeting on compost. It gave us a chance to discuss compost issues face to face with EPA and state officials and to gain a better understanding of their views on composting. Also in attendance were Pennsylvania and West Virginia compost representatives. I am hopeful that the enthusiasm shown at that forum may lead to all five states in Region 3 affiliating themselves with MACA. To that end, our Vice-president, Bob Kerlinger, is heading the team to draft new by-laws to be compatible with our emergence as a regional association. These will be submitted to the membership for approval at the annual meeting; at which time our incorporation of the Association as a non-profit should be in place.

The annual meeting will be hosted by Virginia this year and will be held September 25th at Northern Virginia Community College in Annandale (see inside for details). I know Greg Evanylo has worked diligently to put together a top-notch program. Please make plans to attend; register early, as Greg has told me seating capacity is limited (Marylanders- keep in mind that MDA is accepting attendance at the annual meeting in lieu of examination for compost facility operator's certification renewal). Also make plans to support our Association through membership dues; applications will be available at the registration desk.

Remember-  
 Make Compost the First Amendment  
 to Your Soil's Constitution.

*C. Patrick Condon*

*Extension agent Maggie Moor-Orth  
 hosts MACA exhibit at Dover Days.*

*For more on "MACA on Display  
 in Delaware" turn to page 8.*





## 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL MID-ATLANTIC COMPOSTING ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

Wednesday, September 25, 2002  
Northern Virginia Community College  
Ernst Community Cultural Center  
Annandale, Virginia

- 8:00 a.m. Registration
- 8:45 a.m. Welcome and Introduction – Greg Evanylo, Virginia Tech
- 9:00 a.m. **Session I: Composting Processes, Feedstock and Product Quality**  
Clopyralid impacts on compost quality and use – Bob Rynk, BioCycle  
Alternative composting process for PFRP – Bob Broom, RKB Enterprises
- 10:00 a.m. Break
- 10:30 a.m. **Session II: Compost Use – Marc Tefteau, Univ. of Maryland**  
Compost microbiology – Greg Eaton, Virginia Tech  
Compost use in turfgrass – Erik Ervin, Virginia Tech  
Compost degradation of landfill emissions – Rosalie Green, U.S. EPA
- 12:00 a.m. Lunch
- 1:00 p.m. **Session III: Marketing and Standards – Bob Lane, Virginia Tech**  
U.S. Composting Council Seal of Testing Assurance – Al Rattie, U.S.C.C.  
What compost buyers desire in a product – Paul Hubbs, ITMS, Inc.  
Product development & marketing - Tim Hutchinson, Loudoun Composting
- 2:30 p.m. MACA Business Meeting
- 3:30 p.m. Adjourn

### Registration

The registration fee for this program is \$30 (or \$40 on site) and includes conference materials, break service, and a boxed lunch. **Register early because attendance may be restricted due to limited seating capacity.** For more information and to register online, please visit <https://www.conted.vt.edu/ss1/macareg1.htm>

### Lodging

Lodging rooms have been reserved for September 24th at the Marriott on Fairview Park Drive and the Best Western Inn on Chain Bridge Road. Contact one of these hotels to make your lodging reservation. You must mention the Mid-Atlantic Composting Association conference when making your reservation to receive the special room rate. Please note the lodging rates and cut-off dates as follows:

#### The Marriott

3111 Fairview Park Drive  
800-228-9290 or 703-849-9400

(approximately 2 miles from the Northern Virginia Community College)

Lodging Rate: \$119 per room per night

Cut off date for special rate: September 3rd

#### The Best Western Inn

3535 Chain Bridge Road  
703-591-5500

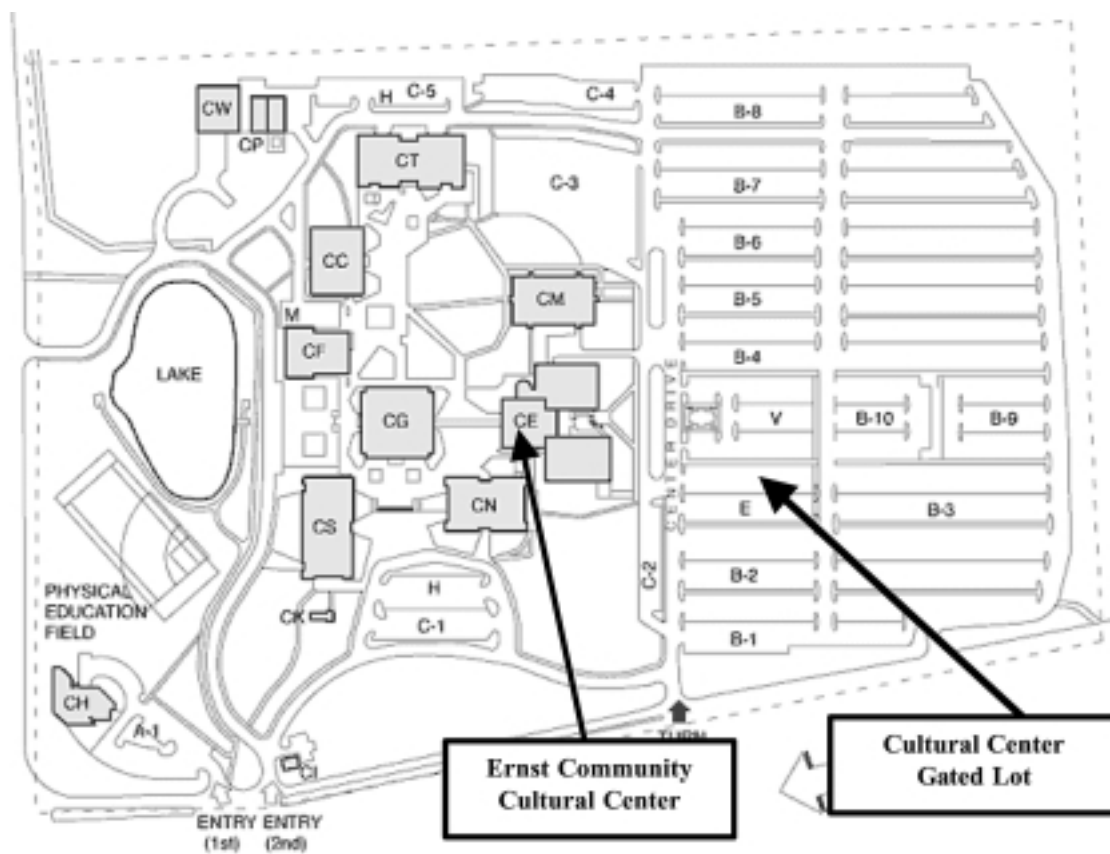
(approximately 4.4 miles from the Northern Virginia Community College)

Lodging Rate: \$89 per room per night  
(includes breakfast)

Cut off date for special rate: September 10th

## MAP & DIRECTIONS

### Northern Virginia Community College Annandale Campus Ernst Community Cultural Center



- **From the Beltway (I-495):**

Take exit 52-A Little River Turnpike west to Fairfax. On Little River Turnpike make a left at the third traffic light, which is Wakefield Chapel Road. On Wakefield Chapel Road make a left turn at the third entrance, which is The NVCC Center Drive. Please park in the Cultural Center Gated Lot.

- **From I-95:**

Take I-495 to Tyson Corner, exit 52-A Little River Turnpike west to Fairfax. On Little River Turnpike make a left at the third traffic light, which is Wakefield Chapel Road. On Wakefield Chapel Road make a left turn at the third entrance, which is The NVCC Center Drive. Please park in the Cultural Center Gated Lot.

- **From Route 236 West:**

On Little River Turnpike turn right on Wakefield Chapel Road. On Wakefield Chapel Road make a left turn at the third entrance, which is The NVCC Center Drive. Please park in the Cultural Center Gated Lot.

## BAGGING AND BLENDING COMPOST

by *Lonnie Heflin,*

*Director of Marketing for New Earth Services, Inc.*

Producing quality compost is a blend of science, engineering and “art.” Each discipline may be required in different proportions based on the feedstocks, available technology and site conditions to produce stable mature compost.

As the new Director of Marketing for New Earth Services, Inc., my challenge is to apply my 20 years of experience in the manufacture and sales of lawn and garden products to position our compost products in the market segments that have the highest beneficial use and greatest potential for return on investment.

The retail lawn and garden market for bagged compost products represents the potential highest market value for compost and helps offset the high cost of transportation. Bulk markets are prevalent but are extremely price sensitive and limit the number of potential customers. Bagged compost provides ease of transportation, plus convenient storage and handling, adding to its value. At the MANTS show (January 8-10, 2002) NES received a tremendous response from garden center, production nurseries, greenhouses and professional grounds managers interested in our compost products. NES’s sales and marketing strategy is based on:

1. The quality of our product.
2. Exceptional customer service and support.
3. The added benefit that the use of our product helps improve the environmental quality of the Chesapeake Bay region.

Lawn top dressing may represent the largest potential high value market for compost. Ease of use has long presented a barrier to this market. Homeowners are used to the ease of application of commercial fertilizer and the resulting quick green up of their lawns. The benefits of lawn top dressing have been well documented, but how do you get people to do it? NES has developed a compost recipe that produces a highly mineral finished compost that can be applied using a standard drop or broadcast spreader that is usually already part of a homeowner’s lawn tool inventory.

The nursery and greenhouse market could receive tremendous benefits from the use of compost. Compost use by this market segment has been limited because growers have been forced to incur increased costs to incorporate compost into their growing media. Research by Dr. John Bouwkamp at the University of Maryland has shown remarkable results from growing media composed of up to 50% Blended Compost. Dr. Bouwkamp’s research has also shown that incorporating Blended Compost into commercially available growing media also showed tremendous results on a wide variety of greenhouse crops. This research has illustrated the benefits of blending composts of different feedstocks to maximize nutrient content. Research at UM has shown increased disease suppression in growing media containing compost blends.

NES has acquired a high volume continuous blending line, providing the largest horticultural growing media blending operation on the Eastern Shore. NES will be marketing “Custom-Blended” growing media to greenhouse growers, perennial growers, container nurseries, interior and exterior landscape contractors, golf courses and grounds managers.

Our bagging facility is part of a cooperative project with the Warrington Foundation using grant funds from EPA to provide a regional manure based compost bagging facility. Packaging NES products provides increased distribution opportunities to the lawn and garden market. The bagging facility is available to other producers of manure composts to improve market access.

Development of “Custom-Blended” growing media from our blending line will lead to the development of new items for our bagged products. Our products will be developed and tested by growers using our products to bring a higher quality plant to market, and the retail market is always receptive to using what the “Pros” use. NES will be exploring new types of packaging to enhance end users perception of our products and continue to position our brand as the quality choice.

Expanding our product line and production capabilities provides NES with greater access to a wider market place. The quality of our products and services positions NES to be the quality compost supplier.



*Lonnie Heflin- old compost enthusiast returns to area as Director of Marketing for New Earth Services, Inc.*

## COMPOST IMPROVES SHELF-LIFE

by Francis R. Gouin, Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland, College Park

Although I have yet to review any research to prove it, I know from experience and from talking with growers who incorporate compost into the rooting media, that bedding plants and pot plants grown in compost amended potting mixes maintain their quality long after they leave the nursery or greenhouse.

One of the big problems of peat-lite mixes is keeping plants healthy and attractive after they have been removed from a regular feeding schedule. Generally after a peat-lite grown plant has been removed from its regular schedule for more than two weeks, it begins to exhibit signs of nitrogen stress. Such plants take on a pale green color and often bottom leaves begin to turn yellow unless the plants on display receive supplemental feedings. In most garden centers and at most discount marts, plants are fortunate to be irrigated before they begin to wilt.

By incorporating as little as one third by volume of compost into a peat-lite mix, you can make a whale of a difference on improving the shelf life of bedding plants and potted plants. Increasing the amount of compost to one half by volume can provide even greater effects.

For the first time, I have been able to produce bedding plants entirely from the nutrients supplied by compost in the rooting medium. This was accomplished by blending two parts by volume of yard debris compost (LeafGro), one part biosolids compost (Orgro) and two parts peat moss. To neutralize the acidity of the peat moss, 5 pounds of dolomitic limestone was added per cubic yard of rooting medium. From the time the seedlings were transplanted into the 806 cell packs, until vegetable transplants and bedding plants were transplanted into the garden, these plants were irrigated only with water.

Using this rooting medium, bedding plants of petunias, coleus, strawflower, marigolds, zinnias, peppers, cabbage, onions, lettuce, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower and tomatoes were grown for 6 to 10 weeks without the use of chemical fertilizers.

Despite the fact that all plants were grown in 806 packs in 10 X 20 trays, the plants maintained a healthy green color and did not become leggy. In other words, the compost supplied all of the nutrient needs of the plants without creating excessive succulent growth. In other words, we did not have to apply any growth regulators. All plants developed strong healthy stems capable of standing upright when transplanted into the garden.

I have always believed that we should maximize the use of compost in order to reduce our dependency on the use of chemical fertilizers. Long before I retired, I felt that we could maximize the use of compost by blending compost made from different feed stock. We know from past research that compost made from different feed stocks have different chemical and physical properties. We also know from research that compost by itself does not have adequate water holding capacity thus necessitating the need to add peat moss.

Although I would like to eventually eliminate the need for peat moss, at the present time peat moss is the most effective amendment that can be used to improve water retention.

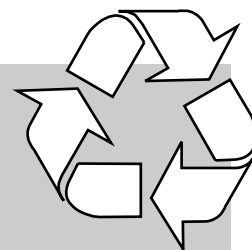
Now that compost quality is the major goal of compost producers in the Maryland region, growers should be more confident in using compost made from different feed stock in developing their own growing medium.

Just think of the cost savings that exist in being able to eliminate the need to add trace elements, fertilizer and cut your peat moss bill by 50% by simply using compost made from different feed stocks for growing plants that will maintain their quality long after they have left the growing facility.

Just think of the savings in time from not having to maintain a regular fertilizer schedule and yet assure that the plants will maintain their quality long after they have been placed on display. If this isn't the ultimate in recycling, what is?

### BETTER COMPOSTING SCHOOL

Don't forget the 11th University of Maryland Better Composting School scheduled for October 23-25. Contact Lew Carr lc5@umail.umd.edu or Marc Tefteau kt4@umail.umd.edu for registration and program information.



## COMPOSTING IN WEST VIRGINIA

by Jim Hill

Composting is alive and well in West Virginia. West Virginia has seven wastesheds each wasteshed has at least one composting facility/activity. Currently there are (25) permitted yard waste composting facilities/activities these include residential and commercial sites, several animal manure composting sites and some unique pilot projects and test sites. The types of composting for permitting purposes are as follows:

- Non Residential Composting Activities cannot charge for accepting yard waste, can accept up to Twelve-Thousand tons per year of acceptable material and approval is simplified.
- Commercial Yard Waste Composting Facilities, these facilities can charge a tipping fee to accept waste, can accept up to Thirty-Six-Thousand tons per year of yard waste generated by sources other than the owner of the facility, must be certified by the Division of Environmental Protection and site approval is more stringent than for a Non Residential Composting activity.
- Sewage Sludge Composting Facilities, there are different standards for sewage sludge permitting.

Non residential composting activities make up the largest category of composting operations. Most of these programs use mainly grass clippings and yard waste while a few use a combination of chicken litter and wood by-products. The city of Charleston, Brook County and Wetzel County use sewage sludge in their composting processes.

The West Virginia Department of Transportation has a large carcass composting program. The compost site is located at the Saltwell Road exit off Interstate 79. Road kills mostly Deer are collected and composted with chicken litter and sawdust. The resulting compost is used to fertilize highway wildflower beds. One positive aspect of this program is that it gives the state a sanitary way to dispose of road kills. The state has nine of these composting sites in operation with two more facilities under construction. Information on this program can be obtained by contacting Gary Dyer, West Virginia Department of Highways, 304-627-2411.

One test site studies the direct application of chicken litter as a fertilizer and audits the leachate for NPDES point source discharge compliance and analyses its influence on growth which is comparable to fertilizer. Information on this project can be obtained by contacting Dr. Al Stiller, West Virginia University, 304-293-2111 Another project studies fuel production from bio compost. The state is also active in utilizing compost for many of its projects.

The Environmental Resources Section of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources provides grants and educational material in an effort to increase recycling and composting and there is an emphasis on market development and household composting. For information on the West Virginia Recycling Assistance Grant Program please contact Jim Hill, Recycling Coordinator, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, 304-558-3370.

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## METHANE REDUCTION POTENTIAL OF COMPOST LANDFILL BIO-COVERS DISCUSSED

by Rosalie Green

On Thursday, March 28th, Office of Solid Waste of EPA hosted a presentation by Marion Huber-Humer, Diplomate in Engineering and Research Fellow from the University of Agricultural Studies in Vienna, Austria. Ms. Humer discussed her research into the use of compost as bio-covers on landfills to greatly reduce and/or eliminate emission of methane (a potent greenhouse gas) into the atmosphere. Data from her work in Austria has shown that a cover of 1 meter of mature compost, when used in conjunction with a gravel gas distribution layer, regularly captures 100% of methane emissions. Audience members from USDA, OSW, Univ. of Maryland and Virginia Tech were interested in this new application of compost technology and how factors such as rainfall, climate and methane production impacted on the efficacy of the covers. The Austrian researchers found that the bio-covers worked over a wide temperature and moisture range and showed the potential to last well over 30 years. For a additional information on this exciting new use for compost and for copies of Ms. Humer's latest paper on this technology, contact Henry Ferland at 703-308-7269.

## THE “CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE” FOR BIOSOLIDS COMPOSTING

by Bill Toffey

Can you imagine a better feedstock? Attractive tipping fee, very readily compostable, highly uniform consistency, no inerts or sharps. That is what biosolids feedstock provides the composter. For the biosolids generator — typically a municipal wastewater agency — composting is a great technology. Where in its other manifestations biosolids can provoke community protests at the drop of a shovel full, when in the form of compost, biosolids can draw a crowd of trucks, lined up for their turn at loading. For the compost customer, biosolids compost has a lasting black color, a high nutrient value, the capability to loosen the compacted soil, and a consistently fine texture. Thanks to the experimental work in the 1970s by the USDA research station in Beltsville, Maryland, composting is a major biosolids processing technology, and the product is a sought-after compost.

No wonder, then, that the Mid-Atlantic region is the “center of the universe” for biosolids composting. With a half-dozen large composting facilities, and twice the number of small ones, no region in the world surpasses the Mid-Atlantic in production. Biosolids composters in this area are producing upwards of 400,000 cubic yards of finished product annually.

Biosolids compost, whether traded as All-Gro, Chesapeake Sunshine, EarthMate or Nutri-Green, commands a loyalty among landscapers in metropolitan centers and among homeowners lucky enough to live near the processing facilities. In the Philadelphia region, the Philadelphia Water Department, Burlington County (NJ) and JP Mascaro’s A&M Composting Facility produce a combined 170,000 cubic yards of compost. About half that amount is available in Baltimore and Washington, DC, from the Baltimore City Composting Facility (a great tragedy to gardeners was the closing several years back of the biosolids composting facility in Silver Spring, Maryland). Other lucky communities with biosolids composting facilities include Virginia Beach, Harrisonburg and Charlottesville, in Virginia; Wheeling (New Martinsville), West Virginia; and State College, Pennsylvania. Some of these are publicly owned and operated, several are private operations, and still others are public/private partnerships.

Biosolids compost has several special properties. Environmental researchers have documented the effects of this compost on reducing “bio-availability” of heavy metals, most notably lead, when used in urban settings. This is a potential health benefit. Other researchers have noted that the phosphorus in biosolids compost, while available for plant root uptake, is virtually insoluble in both soil and aquatic systems. This helps reduce the potential for this source of phosphorus to get into the

Chesapeake Bay and other sensitive aquatic systems. Also, horticulturalists have noted that the balance of primary minor nutrients and of micronutrient in this compost, particularly the high iron content, contribute to strong plant response. A fourth special feature is the low potential for weed seed viability, both from low input of seeds and from high processing temperatures.

Biosolids compost is also the most regulated of compost processes and products. All facilities in this region are designed, constructed and operated to meet strict requirements under state solid waste laws. The product is the only compost that is regulated by more than the fertilizer laws for product quality, particularly in terms of metal contaminants and potential pathogens. Due to the origin of the biosolids feedstock, composters recognize that an extra effort at quality is needed to ensure customer loyalty and repeat sales.

Contact Bill Toffey, Philadelphia Water Department, [william.toffey@phila.gov](mailto:william.toffey@phila.gov) for a list of biosolids composting facilities in the Mid-Atlantic region.

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## COMPOSTING IN THE CLASSROOM

by Hetty E. Francke, “the pied piper of composting”

DNREC awarded 4-H and the New Castle County Master Gardeners of Delaware a grant to offer free classroom composting education during the 2001/2002 school year. The program, reaching over 5500 school children, consisted of a group presentation followed by visits to individual classrooms, where students had a hands-on opportunity to see how composting really works. Additionally, students had the opportunity to learn about worm composting (vermicomposting) as a natural, fun and efficient way to recycle organic material such as kitchen scraps and yard waste. Students investigated the roles plants and animals play in breaking down organic matter. The program “Composting in the Classroom” met several requirements of the Delaware Department of Education Standards for Science and Math.

What is more rewarding than dumping a pile of compost on a table and see students, between kindergarten and 9th grade, either really brave or really grossed out, explore the best of fertilizers come to life, touching and handling worms, making new friends? Learning how waste can turn into resources and that environmental issues need our attention is what the young take to heart!

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## **M.A.C.A. ON DISPLAY IN DELAWARE**

*by Dot Abbott-Donnelly*

As winter days turned warmer and hours of daylight extended, more than 2,500 individuals were enlightened to the benefits of composting by Mid-Atlantic Composting Association (MACA) members. It is this time-of-year when backyard gardeners become energized and Delaware 'outdoor' festivals take advantage of an opportunity to teach enthusiasts about environmental profits. Composting, as a soil amendment, is an extremely important FIRST step to their productive vegetative parcel, whether a grassed front yard, football/soccer field, enhanced wildlife area for birds and butterflies or a vegetable garden.

The Mid-Atlantic Composting Association provided a fully staffed exhibit at the 69th Old Dover Days Festival (Dover, Delaware) and "AG Day On The Farm" (near Wilmington, Delaware). On hand at Old Dover Days was a demonstration of a manual compost spreader. Those who stopped-by the exhibit were encouraged to operate the machine while being briefed on the mechanics of compost, from its inception to the final product. Our exhibit also brought interested individuals into an educational arena at the Ocean City-Maryland Convention Center for the National Public Works Association Convention.

Providing this type of educational experience is just one phase of how the Mid-Atlantic Composting Association is encouraging the manufacturing and use of compost. On May 20, 2002, the Delaware Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control-Division of Air and Waste Management awarded a grant to the Warrington Foundation for the Mid-Atlantic Composting Association. Over the next 12 months, through funding from this grant, MACA will be promoting backyard composting of all yard waste material through the sale of individual recycled plastic 'hoop' bins. We will be expanding our 'traveling' exhibit photos/captions and replicate the contents to create a similar appearance of all three 'traveling' exhibits (one located in Delaware, Maryland and Virginia). Educational handout material will be updated and expanded to provide essential information to all age levels regarding composting. We will also be conducting 'dedicated' workshops to communicate instructions about composts and compost application procedures to consumers, municipal officials and landscape contractors throughout Delaware, using automated spreading equipment sized for urban lawns. A survey of Delaware municipalities will be organized to determine current yard waste handling and processing methods while also identifying actions necessary to improve compost production from yard waste.

*Photos of MACA at Old Dover Days can be found on pages 1 & 10.*

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## **ORGANICS RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING DIRECTORY**

*by Caroline Sherony*

We are in the process of developing a directory of compost manufacturers, suppliers of organic residues available for composting and related organizations and businesses. Cooperative Extension in Virginia is updating its directory and we will be expanding on their work to include the entire Mid-Atlantic region. You can view the current Virginia version at <http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/compost/452-230/452-230.html>

The directory is a comprehensive guide to the companies, organizations, local government agencies and individuals involved in the generation, production and/or marketing of organic materials recycled from waste streams in Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland. (The present version only includes Virginia.) The directory lists sources of organic materials, such as composts, woodchips, mulches, yard wastes, food wastes, processing wastes and stabilized organic wastes, which can be either used directly or converted to a useable product for the horticulture, agriculture, and land reclamation industries. The directory also includes an extensive list of resource and service providers whose expertise lie in the development and/or production of compost and recycled materials. The purpose of the directory is to provide industries and individuals a resource for organics marketing and distribution.

A free listing in the directory is available to your company or organization. Additional advertising space will be available for purchase. Free website links will be provided through the MACA web site.

Additional information and a downloadable PDF survey form will soon be available on the MACA web site (<http://www.delmarvacompost.org>). Also, you can contact Caroline Sherony, CSES Dept, 427 Smyth Hall, VA Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0403. [csherony@vt.edu](mailto:csherony@vt.edu)

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*Paul Hubbs demonstrating mini compost topdresser at Dover Days.*

*For more on "MACA on Display in Delaware" turn to page 8.*



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*Return Service Requested*

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