



# Process Management

It's important that the compost steward(s) has a detailed understanding of how the community composting system is supposed to work, and is keeping tabs on how the system is actually working. This includes monitoring the collection of feedstocks, sourcing materials as needed, reviewing the logbooks, and troubleshooting as needed. It also includes the people-part of the process, providing or arranging for trainings, knowing volunteer availability and scheduling, and fostering clear and open communication.

## Ensure That Best Management Practices Are

### Followed:

- Minimize odors:
  - Quickly incorporate food scraps into the system, use the right amount of carbon & cover with piles & windrows with carbon material or soil.
- Prevent run-off or ponding:
  - Protect your compost system from rainfall, snow & ice by covering your bins, piles or windrows. If your system gets too dry, you can always prop open the bin lids or remove the covers during rainfall.
  - Pay attention to the slope of your site – where will water run after a heavy rain?
  - Consider the addition of a wood chip bedding under piles and windrows; this will help absorb any extra moisture.
  - Consider wood chip, compost or soil berms in key areas, if needed.
  - Consider directing any runoff to a vegetated buffer area.
- Be sure not to harbor rodents or other pests:
  - Keep weeds in check, as they provide habitat for ticks.
  - Don't give rodents & other critters a place to hide – keeping a tidy site is key.
  - See the Community Composting Troubleshooting tip sheet for more on vector control.
- Remember to observe, monitor, sample, & test the finished product.

### Have a Site Plan!

Key elements of a site plan include:

- Overview of the site & system
- Feedstock procurement (especially for carbon sources)
- Monitoring & recordkeeping
- Provisions for controlling odors
- Communication & training (internal & external)
- Be a good neighbor!
- Animal control measures
- Health & Safety, & Fire Emergency plans
- Security & vandalism (if needed)
- Contingencies (including closure plans)

*See the Community Composting Site Plan tip sheet for more detail.*

## Management of Feedstocks

As you operate your site, you'll get a feel for the rhythm of your community, the volume and timing of food scraps coming in, and how quickly you go through your carbon sources.

- Remember to always plan ahead!
  - An integral part to a community composting plan and management is to have PLENTY of carbon on hand. This means that you need a dry, secure place to store it so that it doesn't inadvertently become a home for rodents.

- Be on the lookout for contamination:
  - Training is an iterative part of system management! It's ok to send out reminders if you're seeing contamination creep into your system (produce stickers, plastics, twist ties, or organic material you don't accept in your system). Hone your New Member orientation to be sure that everyone joining your site helps combat contamination.
  - Do you have a new source of carbon materials? Great! However, be sure that you're not inadvertently bringing a new source of contamination. For example, cigarette butts and other small bits are hard to pick out of dry leaves.

**Pro tip:** Remember that as members join or leave your site, the volume of food scraps coming in and amount of carbon needed will change. As you plan for expansion, keep this in mind and double down on the amount of carbon you keep on hand.

## Know Your System & Operate Accordingly

### Simple & "Slow" Method

- Follow the basic recipe for your system  
(See *Compost Recipe Overview tip sheet for more detail*)
- Turn occasionally
- Compost will be ready in 12-18 months

### Active ("Hot" Compost) Method

- Enclosed containers
- Proper "mix" of green & brown feedstocks
- Frequent turning of materials to achieve heat
- Temperature should rise to 90-120°F for 3+ days (131°F is goal)
- Finished compost in 6-8 months

## Communication and Training

Initial and on-going communication and training can make or break a community composting site.

- Recruit & train your team
  - Shared leadership & management make for successful system management.
  - Provide education & outreach.
  - Delegate tasks effectively.
  - Create & know your volunteer schedule.
  - Establish a communication plan.
- Recruit & train everyone contributing food scraps (this may be a different group than those who help manage the system)
  - Effective signage is crucial.
  - Make sure everyone understands the materials accepted & the materials not accepted.
  - Size matters! Be sure that people know if they are expected to chop their food scraps. Consider whether you need to provide tools to do this on site.
  - Establish a communication plan.

## Be a good neighbor!

- Depending on the location of your site, consider the view from the road or nearby houses & buildings.
- Consider using plants, trellis or fencing to screen your site from public view.
- Be mindful to use the proper setbacks from property boundaries.
- Remember: People "smell" with their eyes! A neat site appearance is important.

See the *Be a Good Neighbor tip sheet for more ideas.*

Other Community Composting Tip Sheets to reference: *Compost Recipe Overview; Systems & Operations; Troubleshooting; Recordkeeping; Volunteer Job Planning & Recruitment; Community Composting Site Plan.*

Written with funding from a USDA Rural Utilities Solid Waste Management Grant. NERC is an equal opportunity employer and provider.