

THE FORGOTTEN 25%: COMPOSTING TO IMPLEMENT ZERO-WASTE IN THE TWIN CITIES

About five months ago, when I decided to start a composting bin in my apartment, a skeptical friend asked what the difference was between the material going to a landfill and it simply decomposing. At the time, I had no answer that seemed to satisfy. However, now, given the chance to complete further research, it appears that composting has a much greater environmental influence than simply the amount of landfill we create.

According to the 2009 Eureka Recycling Report, solid waste material in Minnesota contains 53% recyclable material and 25% compostable material. For a state that discards 3.5 million tons as waste, that is 875,000 tons that could be composted each year! The two crucial reasons to strive to reduce this waste through compost in Minnesota is the potential to create nutrient rich soil to replace chemical fertilizers and the ability to greatly reduce global warming emissions.



Being that Minnesota ranks as the sixth top state to provide agriculture in the United States, the condition of the state's soil is of great importance. According to Eureka Recycling, U.S soil is eroding at a rate seventeen times that of its re-growth. By implementing greater usage of composting, we can create healthy soil that retains higher levels of water and carbon dioxide reduces pesticides and eliminates chemical fertilizers, which are known to hold 2.5 gallons of oil per forty-pound bag.

In addition to soil enhancement, composting is also crucial in reducing greenhouse gases. When food scraps breakdown in landfills they create methane – which currently contributes to 3% of greenhouse gases. If left in landfills that do not attempt to convert methane into energy, over the course of twenty years, this methane will become twenty times more powerful.

To combat these issues, Minnesota has aligned their goals with the Urban Environmental Accords, which aims at zero waste by 2040. To accomplish this goal civilian must engineer our society to:

- Create manufacturing-distribution systems that allow for reuse-recycling-composition;
- Be conscious of the food items we purchase;
- Set up commercial composting systems that allow for items such as dairy and meat which cannot be composted at home; and
- Implement city initiatives that encourage composting (Such as the Minneapolis and St. Paul Yard Waste and Composting Sites that allow for compost disposal, free of charge).



Source: <http://www.globalsiteplans.com/environmental-design/communityeconomic-development/the-forgotten-25-composting-to-implement-zero-waste-in-the-twin-cities/>