Pacific Region Compost and Acceptable Materials
About Pacific Region Compost (PRC)

• Just East of the landfill. Although only open to commercial traffic.
• Operates on about 48 acres. 27 owned, 21 leased
• Composting yard debris since the 90’s.
• Started food waste composting in 2010
  • 1st facility in Oregon to become permitted to accept type III materials (food-proteins and dairy)
• PRC processes more than 120,000 tons of residential yard debris and organics, and commercial food waste into compost each year.
• Material comes mainly from Linn, Benton and Marion Counties.
What is Compost?

Compost- is the product manufactured through the controlled aerobic, biological decomposition of biodegradable materials. This product has undergone mesophilic and thermophilic temperatures, which significantly reduces the viability of pathogens and weed seeds, and stabilizes the carbon such that it is beneficial to plant growth. Compost is typically used as a soil amendment, but may also contribute plant nutrients.

As defined by The American Association of Plant and Food Control Officials in 2018, obtained via the US Composting Council website (www.compostingcouncil.org).
Homes
Restaurants
Grocery Stores

Schools
Retail Bagging
Agriculture
Schools

Garden Centers
Erosion Control/Road Projects
Public Parks & Community Gardens

Homeowners
Residential

Key Components: Moisture * Air * Heat

- Residential organics are composted in windrows
- Composting in windrows is more labor intensive
• Commercial Food is composted on an Aerated Static Pile (ASP)
• Food is combined with woody yard debris to create an ideal mix of carbon and nitrogen for composting.
• The mixture is then placed onto aerated pipes, which have air pumped into the mixture, creating aerobic conditions.
• Higher temps kill bacteria, pathogens, and weed seeds.

Commercial
Type 3 feed stocks: source-separated mixed food waste, meat, eggs, dairy products
Other Details About the Composting Process

- Commercial composting reaches higher temps.
- Temp and moisture levels are monitored regularly.
- Compost is tested by an outside lab for:
  - Nutrients, metals, pathogens, germination
- Our composting process requires about 60 days
- PRC is OMRI certified (certified for use on organic crops)
- PRC participates in the USCC Seal of Testing Assurance
Closing the Loop!

This service enables many of our customers to close the loop with organics material, going from garden to kitchen, and back again.
What Goes in the Cart?*

Yard Debris
- Branches/Limbs (up to 4” in diameter)
- Grass Clippings
- Trimmings
- Weeds
- Garden Debris

Food Waste
- Food Scraps including
  - Proteins, Dairy, Bones
  - Grains, Bread
  - Fruits & Vegetables

Leave Out
- Grease/Oils
- Liquids
- All Plastics
- Most Food Soiled Paper
- Animal Waste
- Animal Carcuses
- Treated Wood

*the answer to this question depends on where you live
Bioplastics
An Idea Not Even a Compost Heap Can Love

By Shirley Perez West

As VP for Environmental Services at Rexius, part of Jack Hoeck’s job includes turning food waste into a contaminant-free, marketable soil product. For a city that throws away up to 30,000 tons of food each year, it’s also a valuable public service. And converting mountains of leftover table scraps into rich garden compost, it turns out, is no picnic.

Nearly five years into their program, partners in Love Food Not Waste (LFNW) have reaped a few insights about collecting and composting food waste. First, it’s critical that what’s being collected doesn’t contain items that aren’t compostable. Second, not all supposedly biodegradable materials would supposedly break down along with the organic material and produce energy or rich garden compost. Even bags lining food waste bins could be biodegradable. Brilliant!

Early on, home composters learned that bioplastic containers — supposedly an earth-friendly solution to the need for disposable takeout containers — remain mostly intact in even the healthiest compost pile. Winston and other LFNW of commercial food waste to Rexius’ Highway 99 site. Each load first lands on a bed of wood chips, called a food pad, which absorbs liquid oozing from decomposing fruits and vegetables. Next, Rexius Retail Yard Supervisor Kevin Roemer and his team move the pile around with a tractor to look for contaminants. A staff member fills out a monitor form for each load, noting the number and description of picks — non-compostable items that must be removed.

“Other contaminants range from pop cans and water bottles to foil and silverware. If a load contains more than 20 picks, the hauler receives a $25 fine. The amount grows with the number of contaminants, topping out at $200. A load containing more than 200 gallons or 150 picks must be rejected and sent to the landfill, costing the hauler an additional $75 load fee.

In the early days of LFNW, says Roemer, haulers and their commercial clients were on a learning curve and, consequently, loads contained more unwanted items. Now most loads have

Want to support businesses doing the right thing when it comes to food waste? Find a full list of LFNW participants at: www.eugene-or.gov/759/Commercial-Food-Waste-Collection

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“Compostable” Products

- Do not always break down
- Do not add nutrients to the compost
- Cannot easily be discerned from non-compostable products
A Message from Composters Serving Oregon:

Why We Don't Want Compostable Packaging and Serviceware

Every year, the Pacific Northwest’s compost industry turns hundreds of thousands of tons of yard and food wastes into nutrient-rich compost for agriculture, nurseries, landscaping businesses and home gardens. The quality compost products that we create develop healthier and more resilient soil, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, recycle nutrients, conserve water, and may reduce the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides.

“Compostable” packaging and serviceware items have been on the rise for the past decade and they are increasingly ending up in our facilities. These materials compromise our composting programs and limit many of the environmental benefits of successful composting.

Here are nine reasons why we don’t want “compostable” packaging or serviceware delivered to our facilities:

1. They don’t always compost: Not all ‘certified’ compostable items will actually compost (break down) as fully or quickly as we need them to. This is because certification standards test compostability based on laboratory conditions. Those conditions are not always replicated in the real world (our facilities) which means that some “compostable” items don’t fully compost. The result is a finished compost that is contaminated with bits of partially degraded “compostable” material.

2. Contamination happens: As a consumer, you may sort properly – but your neighbor might not. When collection programs accept compostable products, non-compostable look-alike items inevitably end up in the mix. These materials then must be removed, either at the start or at the end (as pieces of garbage mixed in with finished compost). Either way, this contamination increases our operating costs and degrades the quality of our product, which makes the compost industry less economically viable.

3. They hurt resale quality: We don’t want to produce finished compost that is contaminated with fragments of packaging and serviceware, and our consumers won’t purchase contaminated material. Contamination lowers the value of our product, making it difficult and sometimes impossible to sell. When fewer people use compost, its environmental benefits aren’t realized.

4. We can’t sell to organic farmers: Farmers often use compost in the production of certified organic foods. National standards prohibit the use of many different packaging materials when making compost used to grow crops certified as “USDA Organic”. Accepting packaging and serviceware at our facilities hinders our ability to provide finished compost to organic farmers.

5. They may threaten human and environmental health: Packaging designed for water and grease resistance as well as other consumer packaging may contain chemicals that can transfer into finished compost. From the compost, these chemicals may then transfer to ground and surface waters, be taken up by plants, and lead to negative health impacts. While some chemicals of concern are being voluntarily phased out by some packaging producers, not all have been outlawed, and alternatives are not always guaranteed to be safe. Separately, non-degraded fragments of plastic packaging can contaminate finished compost, intensifying environmental health concerns when it is used by buyers. We want to keep our compost clean and safe for all.
6 It increases our costs and makes our job harder: Some of us have accepted compostable packaging in the past, and found that loads of compostable packaging require us to change our processes, adding water, using more energy and spending additional resources to produce finished compost. Some types of compostable packaging mostly degrade into carbon dioxide and water and leave behind little of value for all of the extra effort required.

7 Just because something is compostable doesn’t mean it’s better for the environment. Oregon DEQ has found that compostable serveware often has a larger (life-time) environmental footprint than non-compostable items*. For example, compostable materials may require more fossil energy use, release more greenhouse gases, or result in more ecological toxins than their non-compostable counterparts, mostly due to how they’re made. The research confirms what scientists already know: that what materials are made of, and how they’re made, may be more significant than whether they’re composted vs. landfilled. “Composting” and “compostable” are not the same idea. Composting is a beneficial treatment option for organic wastes, but “compostable” is not a guarantee of low impact.

8 In some cases, the benefits of recycling surpass those of composting. Some items, like paper bags, can be either composted or recycled. Generally speaking, the recycling of manufactured materials (such as packaging) back into new products or packaging can provide greater overall environmental benefits than composting does.

9 Good intentions aren’t being realized. Compostable items often cost more – sometimes up to five times as much as non-compostable alternatives. That’s a lot of money spent on products that might not actually help the environment – money that could be spent in more productive and beneficial ways.

Not only do compostable products often cost more to purchase, they also drive up the costs to operate our facilities and impede our ability to sell finished compost. Compostable packaging is promoted as a means of achieving “zero waste” goals but it burdens composters (and recyclers) with materials that harm our ability to efficiently process recovered materials. Reusable dishware is almost always a better choice for the environment. If you must use single-use items, please don’t put them in your compost bin.

We need to focus on recycling organic wastes, such as food and yard trimmings, into high-quality compost products that can be used with confidence to restore soils and conserve resources. Compostable packaging doesn’t help us to achieve these goals. We need clean feedstocks in order to produce quality compost.

Please help us protect the environment and create high quality compost products by keeping “compostable” packaging and serveware out of the compost bin.

Thanks for your cooperation!

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*See [https://www.oregon.gov/deq/FilerDocs/compostable.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/deq/FilerDocs/compostable.pdf)