Using Composted Dairy and Poultry Manure

What is compost?

Compost is a complex material that has been transformed from raw organic materials, such as dairy and poultry manure, into a stable, nutrient rich substance known as humus. It is primarily used as a fertilizer, soil amendment, and mulch.

How is it made?

Compost is produced by combining organic materials (such as yard trimmings, food scraps, manures) in the proper proportions in piles, rows or vessels. Temperature, moisture and oxygen are adjusted to help accelerate decomposition through the action of bacteria and fungi. Bulking agents (such as wood shavings or straw) are added as needed to provide air space. Finished compost is allowed to fully stabilize through a curing period of 2 to 6 months.

Who uses compost?

- Homeowners
- Farmers
- Landscapers
- Construction firms
- Nurseries

What is compost used for?

- As a mulch
- Container mixes
- Fertilizing landscape and garden plants
- Renovating or establishing turf
- Field crop and vegetable production
- Erosion control

What are the benefits of using compost?

Compost helps build healthy soils because it adds lots of organic matter.

Increasing the organic matter content of soils through compost allows more water to penetrate the root zone and reduces soil compaction.

Healthy soils attract beneficial insects, earthworms, and micro-organisms, which in turn help plants to thrive.

Using compost helps reduce or eliminate the need for fertilizer N, P, and K.

Compost can also be a good source of micronutrients such as zinc, iron, copper and manganese.

Compost is a renewable resource, unlike peat moss, which is not.

Photo courtesy of Nadine Davitt, Pennsylvania State University

Manure happens. Use it, don't lose it.

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