



# Compost Education

*Composting is becoming the method of choice for converting organic waste into a marketable product. If horticultural industries and home gardeners are to accept commercial compost as they do fertilizers, processed animal manures, and peatmoss, it must be produced under controlled conditions employing methods deemed acceptable by the industry.*

## Composting Process

Horticultural industries such as nurseries, greenhouses, landscape contractors, garden centers, and landscape maintenance companies are major users of organic matter and fertilizers. Managers of composting facilities must be familiar with these compost standards, with the waste materials they utilize, and the composting systems that can best produce the desired products. Composting to produce a product that is consistent in quality requires good management and quality control. This educational program teaches participants the basics of making quality compost. Students tour commercial operations, perform product sampling, and learn simple procedures for compost testing.

The composting process is also appropriate for on-farm disposal of animal mortalities that occur as the normal byproduct of animal agriculture, as well as the infrequent mass mortality losses. Whole animal compost systems provide bio-security, address legal issues, address most air and water quality issues, and provide a useful final product. Systems vary from species to species but have a great many similarities. Within these web pages, you will find composting resources, descriptions and announcements of educational programs, and links to other compost resources.

## Compost Extension Education Programs

Commercial composting is different from backyard composting. The volume and type of materials creates the potential to generate nuisance odors and health problems. Therefore, educational programs have been initiated to teach operators appropriate methods from composting to turn out a useful, economically viable product and/or to compost efficiently and effectively with feed stocks that hold the potential to create problems.

The **Mid-Atlantic Better Composting School** is a four-day short course that teaches the basics of making good compost, troubleshooting, provides the opportunity to tour several commercial operations, perform product sampling and learn procedures for compost testing.

The **1-Day Poultry Mortality Composting** short course teaches poultry farm operators the basics of the compost process, the variables that control the process, recipes to successfully compost, and the items that must be controlled: time, oxygen, moisture, pH, C:N ratio. This is a course specific to whole animal poultry mortality composting, including bio-security, legal and environmental issues.