Backyard Composting Program

5 Points

Updated May 2018

Updates include resubmission requirements and new spotlights

The objective of this educational program is to increase residents’ use of backyard composting. Municipal waste will be reduced as food scraps and yard trimmings are disposed of through backyard composting piles. Municipalities may opt to provide backyard composting bins as well as education to interested residents. This program would complement a Pay As You Throw program.

Why is it important?

Between 1985 and 2003, the amount of solid waste generated in New Jersey increased by an average of about 4% annually. During that time, the tonnage of material disposed actually decreased by approximately 1.6 million tons, and the amount of municipal solid waste (MSW) which was recycled increased (according to reported recycling activity) by approximately 2.5 million tons. In spite of these two trends, the waste stream continues to grow faster than the State’s ability to recycle it. Recycling is only part of the solution; Waste Reduction is also important.

Waste Reduction is important to sustainability for the following reasons:

- Reduces the need for landfilling and incineration.
- Prevents pollution caused by the manufacturing of products from virgin materials.
- Saves energy.
- Decreases emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute to global climate change.
- Conserves natural resources such as timber, water, and minerals.
- Protects and expands U.S. manufacturing jobs and increases U.S. competitiveness.
- Helps sustain the environment for future generations.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

The municipal recycling coordinator (preferably one who is certified) or other appropriate municipal staff involved in waste management should be involved in the implementation of this action.

Your municipality’s lead on this action may want to reach out to organizations that can assist or provide backyard composting workshops for residents. These include the following groups:

- The New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) Cooperative Extension -- for assistance or to work with local Master Gardeners.

- The New Jersey Master Gardeners -- trained volunteers who assist Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension in its mission to deliver horticulture programs and information to the general public. For more information see:
Individuals who have participated in the Rutgers Environmental Stewardship Program. For more information on the program see: [http://envirostewards.rutgers.edu/In%20brief.htm](http://envirostewards.rutgers.edu/In%20brief.htm)

Volunteers from local garden clubs, local libraries, or local garden centers.

**Timeframe**

A good time to launch this program is in the spring or fall. Depending on the scope of the educational program, it will take six to twelve weeks to prepare.

**Project costs and resource needs**

If the municipality does not have a CRP, the Rutgers Office of Continuing Education offers the New Jersey Recycling Certification Series. Individuals have three options for certification, depending on their level of previous professional experience in the field and prior certification: full certification, alternate certification, or re-certification. For information on the series and costs see: [http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu/programs/recycling_solid_waste.html](http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu/programs/recycling_solid_waste.html)

Costs will be minimal and mostly consist of staff time and educational materials. The municipality may choose to supply or partially subsidize composting bins for residents. Commercial backyard composting bins will cost $50 and up.

Municipalities can use their Recycling grant funds to pay for this expense.

**What to do, and how to do it (“How To”)**

Below we have listed the requirements for earning points for this action.

1) You must demonstrate that your Backyard Composting Program was operational from within 18 months of the June submission deadline.

2) Establish a program that includes workshops or other strategies to enable community members to implement backyard composting and promote the program to the public. The municipality must be significantly involved in order to get credit for a county program for backyard composting.

We have provided extensive guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. You do not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as your final product meets the requirements.

1) Convene a committee to develop a community-wide program that encourages backyard composting. Municipalities should check with their County Recycling Coordinator for information on regional initiatives in which the town’s program may be integrated. However, your municipality must demonstrate significant involvement and participation in the program. It will not be enough to piggy back onto the county’s program.

2) Identify compost bins that the municipality can purchase to distribute to residents. The cost of the bins can be passed through to residents or be subsidized by the town.

3) Organize a backyard composting workshop. Contact an organization that can provide assistance or lead the workshop. (See “Who Should Lead and Be Involved” section of this action.) Identify paid individuals or volunteers to conduct or assist with the workshop. Consider coordinating the workshop with other municipal events.

4) Work with the individuals conducting the workshop to select the appropriate educational material. Publicize the program and availability of composters to community residents, and develop materials for workshop participants.

**What to submit to earn points for this action**

In order to earn points, your submission must meet the following standards:

1) You must demonstrate that your Backyard Composting Program was operational from within 18 months of the June submission deadline and is an ongoing program. Specify the date the program was launched and describe any follow up activities.
2) Identify what your municipality did to promote backyard composting.

3) Identify and illustrate how the Backyard Composting Program was promoted. Submit sample promotional materials developed and used to advertise the program.

4) Estimate the number of people participating in the Backyard Composting Program.

Submit the following documentation to verify the action was completed to the above standards. (Log in to the password protected webpage where you submit your online application for certification to write in the text box and upload documents).

In the text box, please provide a short narrative (300 word max) to summarize what was accomplished and the general steps taken to accomplish it. Your narrative should identify the date the Backyard Composting Program was launched and describe what your municipality did to promote backyard composting. For example: Did your municipality organize a committee? Did your municipality organize a workshop? Were compost bins distributed to residents? Was the event part of a broader effort to raise awareness in your municipality? If the backyard composting program was part of a county program, specify how your municipality participated in and promoted the day. Also, indicate how many residents participated in the program.

- Upload: Sample promotional materials developed and used to advertise the program.

Resubmission Requirements

To resubmit for this action, provide full documentation from within 18 months of the June certification application deadline. Please elaborate on program changes since the initiative was first started.

Approved Action Expiration Date

All actions will be set to expire 18 months from the date of the program and/or the date on the promotional/educational materials.

IMPORTANT NOTES: You can upload up to six separate documents for each action. Please excerpt relevant information from large documents. Please remember that your submissions will be viewable by the public as part of your certified report.

Spotlight: What NJ municipalities are doing

Morristown Town

During 2016-2017, the Town of Morristown and Sustainable Morristown held several events to promote composting for both businesses and residents in the town of Morristown. Multiple sustainable Morristown educators went out to the business in Morristown and talked with employees and the business about the benefits of composting. Sustainable Morristown also held an event at Whole Foods educating families about the benefits of composting, how to compost, waste reduction, and guidance on how to purchase composters for apartments and homes. At the Grando Fondo bicycle event and at the Festival Earth Event Sustainable Morristown and other organizations volunteered their time to coordinate composting efforts for the entire event in conjunction with the town of Morristown. These volunteers explained that the event was low or no landfill and how composting is a preferable way to dispose of waste that would otherwise go to a landfill. Diversion rates were tracked and communicated in recap articles. Composter talking points were used at each event. Rain barrels and Composters were also sold at Festival Earth.

- Backyard Composting Guide
- Sale Promotion
- Composting Events
- Event Photo
- Event Photo with Bins

Nutley Township
The Township of Nutley hosted its first Compost Day on June 5, 2010. Residents of Nutley were invited to come down to meet with a Master Gardener and learn about the importance of composting, as well as the overall process of composting. Residents were given the opportunity to purchase compost bins at a discounted price and were invited to take some of the town’s compost that was made with leaves and debris previously collected throughout the town. At last count, 30 bins had been purchased by town residents. The Compost Day event was purposely scheduled to coincide with the opening of the Nutley Farmers’ Market to encourage residents to compost the discarded items from their market purchases and to demonstrate how the two work hand in hand. The township's website contains a step by step demonstration page on composting, as well. For more information regarding the Township of Nutley's Farmers' Market and its schedule, go to: http://www.nutleynj.org/farmersmarket

Ridgewood Village

The Ridgewood Environmental Advisory Committee (REAC), the Department of Parks and Recreation, and Bergen County Utility Authority (BCUA), formally launched Ridgewood's Backyard Composting Program in 2016 with an educational seminar. Part of the “Back-to-Basics: Healthy Lifestyle” series, the backyard composting program featured a presentation by Angela Bonanno-Lynch, BCUA Solid Waste Educator and Technical Advisor. She shared the basic recipe for successful backyard composting, what to compost and why, the methods most commonly used, and the various benefits of composting. The use of an “Earth Machine” compost bin was explained in detail and the devices were made available for purchase at a reduced rate of $60 through Parks and Recreation following the presentation. Approximately a dozen families attend the kickoff presentations on April 30th, 2016 and since that time many others have reached out to event organizers to inquire about the purchase of an Earth Machine. Educational materials related to Backyard Composting remain publicly available on the Village of Ridgewood website, through Parks and Recreation, and from the Recycling Center.

- Website Promotion
- Flyer
- Online Brochure

Resources

Association of New Jersey Recyclers
http://www.anjr.com

Ecocycle
http://www.ecocycle.org/

Learn How to Compost
http://www.sodgod.com/composting/

Lower East Side Ecology Center
http://www.lesecologycenter.org/

National Recycling Coalition
http://www.nrc-recycle.org

NJDEP Source Reduction Page
http://www.state.nj.us/dep/dshw/recycling/source_red.htm

Seattle Tilth
http://seattletilth.org/

http://www.reduce.org/

United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/index.htm

Waste Prevention – King County, WA
http://your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/wasteprevention/index.asp