

Before you head out with your wheelbarrow - Compost, what is it?

Simply put, composting is a decomposition process, which is caused by bacterial and fungal organisms. Large amounts of organic matter can be reduced in a relatively short time to a pile of black, crumbly humus, which makes an ideal soil conditioner. The decomposition of organic matter adds large amounts of nutrients to the soil. Compost added to soil benefits the soils' water holding characteristics and the structure will improve due to the humus containing substances which cause aggregation (sticking together) of soil particles. In clay soil this means that the microscopic individual particles clump together and more air spaces will be opened up between aggregates. Compost contains humic acid and other organic acids which help to degrade compounds naturally present in the soil, into the simpler forms that plants use.



Horse Manure Compost—is it safe to use?

When fully composted, yes. But many horse owners do not have the time or equipment to fully compost stall waste (horse manure and wood shavings from bedding). You may need to finish the composting process on your property by keeping the material moist and aerating it by turning the compost pile. Check with multiple horse owners for compost that fits your needs.

Completed composted material will be dark brown, light and fluffy. Ideally, there should be no discernible pieces of the original material and should not smell bad, but be a pleasant earthy smell.

For more information on composting, and compost structures, contact the Virginia Cooperative Extension - Prince William Master Gardener Helpline (703) 792-7747 or master_gardener@pwcgov.org and ask for publication 426-325.

This program has been developed by the Prince William Soil & Water Conservation District in the interest of protecting water quality. For more information about District services, or to add your name to our list, contact us at:

Prince William Soil & Water
Conservation District
8850 Rixlew Lane, Manassas, VA 20109
(571) 379-7514 www.pswcd.org
pswcd@pswcd.org

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Gardener's Gold



**Your list of farms with
FREE composted horse
manure located near you**

***A win-win program for
horse owners and
gardeners alike!***



Free organic fertilizer



Please call for availability

These local horse owners have free composted manure that they would like to share with their "horseless" neighbors. Contact farms for information about the condition of their compost and pickup details.

* Can Load Trucks

Haymarket:

*Stacey Daugherty (703) 754-4378
Vicki Rosner (703) 754-1221
Frazer Hendrick (703) 753-0670
Kim Bednash (703) 753-9794

Manassas:

Bonnie Fulford-Nahas (703) 361-7409
Liz Hinton (703) 785-4675

Gainesville:

*Kay Shiner (703) 753-9046
Edith Kennedy (703) 754-7645
*Thamara Horse Boarding Facility
(703) 753-3405
*Courtney Putz (703) 728-8555

Nokesville:

*Vicki Rizzo (703) 594-3342
Robin Lancaster (703) 754-7776
Scott Legg (703) 594-3822
*Jimmie Jones cell (240) 565-5480
*Karin Hernandez (703-772-6955)
*Amy Fries (571) 505-1428

Bristow:

Margaret Bailey (703) 754-8492
Laura Butler (703) 369-4224
*Cathy Cherry (703) 477-9525

Note of caution:

Some horse owners treat their land with herbicides, traces of which may pass through the horses and be found in the compost. These compounds may interfere with the growth of certain garden plants. It is your responsibility to ask what herbicides have been used in the production of their feed and hay. There may also be weed seeds in the compost, which may be undesirable in gardens. See Pyridine Herbicide Carryover: Causes and Precautions at <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/2909/2909-1413/2909-1413.html>

Farms outside PWC:

Clifton

*Caroline Squair (703) 815-0235

Fairfax Station

Joan Onders (703) 323-1140

Lorton

Eve Harris (703) 339-6295

