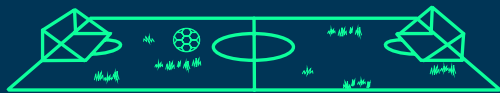


# Cool Compost



## Show Notes

With the NSW Government's target for all households to have food and garden organics recycling services by 2030, councils can make the most of the growing availability of quality compost.

### What is commercial compost?

Commercial compost is made from food and garden organics (FOGO) waste, collected through kerbside bin services.

This material is turned into compost at commercial composting facilities. There are different methods of composting, all of which speed up the natural decomposition of materials into nutrient-rich organic matter.

Councils can buy back this locally made resource to use in their own operations.

Commercial compost is required to meet strict Australian Standards to ensure that it's good quality and free from weeds and contaminants.



The lush green Kahibah Oval is a regional showpiece for Lake Macquarie Council. Photo: AgEnviro Solutions.

### Episode 4: Compost for councils

Councils are largely responsible for managing our waste all the way to the recycling facility or landfill. They are also responsible for landfill and keeping our waterways clean. Did you know that compost made from recycled food and garden organic waste is a solution to both these challenges?

In episode 4 of the Cool Compost series, we showcase how councils are trialling waste reduction initiatives to achieve sustainability and circular economy goals.

### Create healthy green spaces

Commercial compost can help create healthier green spaces and better sporting fields.

Because it's made from food and garden organics waste, compost is a nutrient-rich source of organic matter. It boosts biological activity and improves the health and growth of plants.

By amending sporting fields with compost or using it in the construction of new fields, you can make turf more resilient and able to last throughout the playing season.

### Boost water efficiency

Compost also increases water efficiency. It has been proven to improve the structure of soil and water retention. So, by incorporating compost into green spaces and sporting fields, these areas can be more resilient and require less irrigation, saving time, maintenance and money.

With the impacts of climate change and increasing pressure on water resources, it makes sense to use compost as councils seek to adapt and improve operations into the future.



Eric Love, Centre for Organic Research and Education.  
Photo: EPA.

## Advanced stormwater biofiltration

Compost can be incorporated into urban stormwater biofiltration to improve water quality. Stormwater biofilters are vegetated basins or swales with layers of natural material, usually sand.

The stormwater is diverted into the biofilter where it ponds and slowly filters down through the layers of natural material before going into a drainage pipe or soaking into the surrounding soils. The plants and natural materials help remove pollutants.

While sand has traditionally been used as the natural material in biofilters, compost is opening up new opportunities and providing better results.

“The circular economy issue is very significant. If we are producing and managing our own waste here in our own LGA, that’s ideal.

We’d like to get to that point where these rain gardens, for example, are fully constructed with materials that we are recycling here from our own compost.”

- Carol Duncan, Councillor, City of Newcastle.

## Showcase of success: Newcastle biofiltration trial



Tim Askew, Hunter Joint Organisation and Eric Love, Centre for Organic Research and Education.  
Photo: EPA.

Through an Organics Market Development Grant, the NSW Environment Protection Authority funded a trial conducted by the City of Newcastle and the Centre for Organic Research and Education on using compost in stormwater biofiltration.

The City of Newcastle already had biofiltration sites in place, but the plants were not thriving. The trial tested whether using compost made from 100% recycled material, including recycled food and garden waste, improved overall results. It was conducted on two different sites – a small rain garden and a large detention basin.

Compared to the original sand filters, compost provided better nutrients for the plants and helped to feed the microbes under the ground. This improved the soil and biodiversity of the area.

The trial also demonstrated that biofiltration can remove a wide range of pollutants including hydrocarbons (from grease and oil), excess nutrients (like phosphorus and nitrogen), sediments and heavy metals.

## Sustainability and circularity goals

Because it returns food and garden organics back to the land, compost regenerates our environment and is helping to accelerate the shift to a circular economy.

Compost reduces waste, reduces water use, reduces stormwater pollution, creates healthier green spaces, boosts opportunities for carbon sequestration and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

When food and garden waste goes to landfill (instead of being recycled), it produces methane – a potent greenhouse gas contributing to climate change.

So, by using and encouraging the procurement of commercial compost, councils can divert valuable resources from landfill while helping to reduce emissions. This also reduces waste levies and the need for landfill expansion and associated costs.

## Promote food and garden organics recycling

With the NSW Government's commitment to ensure all households have kerbside FOGO services by 2030, the production and availability of compost is set to expand rapidly across the state.

Using locally-made compost in green spaces, sporting fields and stormwater management provides councils with an opportunity to educate the public about the benefits of food and garden organics recycling.

Residents appreciate knowing where their food and garden waste goes after they put it in their kerbside food and garden organics bin. And they are more careful with what they put into their bins if they know how it is being recycled and what it is used for.

## What to look for when buying compost

Quality is vital. Make sure any compost you buy complies with Australian Standard AS4454 (Composts, soil conditioners and mulches) and the **NSW Resource Recovery Exemptions**.

This ensures your compost is good quality and free from contaminants.

Specifications have been developed for compost use in biofiltration and on sporting fields. When amending or constructing sporting fields with compost, success depends on using quality blends, site-specific management and ongoing maintenance. So, it's important to engage an expert to provide advice on your specific needs.

Soil testing is also important, as every soil needs different nutrients. Compost can be custom-made to suit requirements, so be sure to first request a consultation with your compost supplier.

## About the program

The Cool Compost program showcases the results of the NSW Environment Protection Authority's Waste Less, Recycle More Organics Market Development Grants program. The information provided in these Show Notes is based on evidence and results of the grant projects and activities.

## More information

To watch the video and listen to the podcast, visit [circularag.com.au/compost](https://circularag.com.au/compost)

Watch the AgEnviro sporting field videos [agenviro.com/media](https://agenviro.com/media)

Read about CORE's bio-filtration technology [core.asn.au/divisions/core-water](https://core.asn.au/divisions/core-water)

The Australia Organics Recycling Association is the peak industry body for compost processors [aora.org.au](https://aora.org.au)

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