

Lawn Waste Disposal/Composting

Description

Dispose of yard waste to minimize adverse impacts to the environment by keeping waste out of storm drains. Recycle and compost organic materials whenever possible.

Basic Practice Guidelines

Disposal

1. Keep lawn clippings and debris out of gutters.
2. Leave grass clippings on the lawn to provide supplemental nitrogen.
3. When blowing walkways or mowing lawns, direct equipment so that the clippings blow back onto the lawn rather than into the street.
4. Chip and use trimmings of woody plant material from shrubs and trees as mulch for water conservation.
5. Leave spruce and pine needles under evergreen trees.
6. When site constraints require off-site disposal of lawn waste, use landfills and recycling/composting facilities designed for yard waste, whenever practical.

Composting

7. Compost organic plant material for later use as a soil amendment.
8. Select the compost location in an area with partial shade and protected from the wind.
9. Ensure that the plant material is not diseased or weed containing. Also, generally avoid plants treated with weed killers. Exceptions include soil-inactive glyphosphate products such as Roundup or Kleenup, when used in small quantities.
10. Alternate different types of plant material in 6 to 8 inch layers. Composting is effective on most yard wastes such as leaves, vegetable and flower plant parts, straw and a limited amount of woody prunings and grass clippings. Moderate sized plant materials of ½ to 1½ inches are most effective—avoid materials that are too large or too fine.
11. Avoid highly resinous wood and leaf prunings from plants such as junipers, pine, spruce and arborvitae. Although some grass clippings can be incorporated, they are best left on the lawn to recycle nutrients to the soil.
12. Compost should be kept moist, but not soggy.

BMP Type			
Design			
Installation			
Maintenance/Operation		X	
Green Industry Relevance			
ASLA		GCC	X
ALCC	X	ISA	X
CALCP	X	RMSGGA	X
CGGA	X	WFC	
CNA	X		

13. Mix equal parts of green and dry material to maintain the best nitrogen balance.
14. Routinely mix and turn the compost to provide uniform aeration.
15. Rather than constantly adding new material to almost-finished compost, start a new compost pile.

Regional or Industry Considerations/Adaptations

1. Colorado winter temperatures may extend the time necessary to produce “finished” compost. Additionally, Colorado’s dry climate may require addition of supplemental moisture to compost to maintain microbial activity.

Key References

- City and County of Denver. 2000. Denver Landscape Design and Maintenance Guidelines for Water Conservation on City Owned and Operated Properties. Denver, CO: City.
- Colorado State University Cooperative Extension. 2001. Composting. *Planttalk* Colorado 1600. (www.ext.colostate.edu/ptlk). Ft. Collins, CO: CSU.
- Wilson, C.R. and J.R. Feucht. 2001. Gardening—Composting Yard Waste Fact Sheet No. 7.212 (www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/garden/07212). Ft. Collins, CO: Colorado State University Cooperative Extension
- Urban Drainage and Flood Control District. 1999. *Urban Storm Drainage Criteria Manual, Volume 3, Stormwater Best Management Practices*. Denver, CO: UDFCD.