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# FACT SHEET

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## REDUCE AND RECYCLE GREEN WASTE

### What Is Green Waste?

The State Department of Health defines “green waste” as solid waste that includes leaves, grass clippings, garden and yard wastes, tree trunks, holiday trees, tree trimmings, and/or prunings.

The Department of Health wants to encourage every homeowner and renter to reduce and recycle the amount of green waste created when gardening, maintaining your yard, or when taking away old Christmas trees.

Commercial businesses and institutions are also encouraged to adopt similar practices, to the best extent economically feasible, to reduce the weight of green wastes generated by their maintenance crews when performing their daily activities.

The Department of Health, Office of Solid Waste Management is also working with other State government agencies to educate and develop programs to reduce and recycle different types of materials, including green wastes.

### How to Manage Green Wastes

**Reduce** green waste amounts thrown away through either “grasscycling,” and/or backyard composting.

“GRASSCYCLING”. Leaving grass clippings on the lawn reduces the need for fertilizers, and reduces maintenance time for the lawn (EPA, 1995). Simply leaving grass clippings on the lawn after mowing may significantly reduce the volume of grass wastes discarded, save on time spent to rake and bag grass clippings, save trash bag expenses, keep tons of material out of island landfills, and allow the nitrogen-rich clippings to return nutrients to the soil.

**BACKYARD COMPOSTING**. HRS, Chapter 342G, describes “backyard composting” as small-scale composting of organic materials, primarily yard wastes, at the site where these materials are generated. The objective of backyard composting is to allow yard wastes to biologically decompose together to make a stable, humus-like mulch or soil amendment that you can use to return nutrients to your yard.

When done properly, making compost from green wastes is a natural way of turning wastes into a valuable resource. Around the home, compost may be used as mulch around trees and shrubs, can be mixed with soil to improve soil quality, or can be used in potting soil mixes. Compost benefits gardens, plantings and lawns as it:

- ! loosens clay and compacted soils to improve drainage;
- ! increases moisture retention for more sandy, porous soils, thus conserving water usage;
- ! controls soil erosion; and
- ! suppresses weeds



A number of library resources are available on the Internet to help you build and maintain a compost pile in ways that will minimize odors (due to decomposition) and other nuisance concerns for your neighbors, what you need to compost yard wastes effectively, and what *not* to include in a compost pile. Visit and scroll down the list of reports currently available on the following EPA web sites at [www.epa.gov/compost/](http://www.epa.gov/compost/) or [www.epa.gov/region09/waste/solid/compost.htm](http://www.epa.gov/region09/waste/solid/compost.htm). Because compost literature is constantly updated, they are not listed in this document. For more information on home composting workshops in your area, contact your county Solid Waste Division or Recycling Office.

If backyard composting or “grasscycling,” is not feasible, you still can join in the **recycling** effort by properly placing green wastes **inside** bins located at select drop-off sites on your island.

**DROP OFF SITES.** Yard wastes and bulky green wastes can also be placed inside containers designated only for green wastes, at refuse convenience centers, or in bins located at transfer stations around your island. Place green wastes inside, not outside or around the bins. Some of these drop off sites accept only residential green waste.

Christmas TreeCycling drop-off sites are available during the first two weekends after each New Year’s Day. During that time, a list of Christmas tree collection sites may be found at [www.state.hi.us/health/eh/shwb/sw](http://www.state.hi.us/health/eh/shwb/sw). Only trees that are free of tinsel, nails, or flocking material can be collected for recycling.

**NEIGHBORHOODS WITH CURBSIDE COLLECTION OF GREEN WASTE.** To encourage residents to recycle yard wastes, some counties with automated refuse collection are also providing curbside pickup of green wastes. To ensure proper pickup, these counties have special requirements on how residents should properly cut, bundle, bag securely and set green wastes at the curbside, apart from regular rubbish. You should also take safety precautions when setting green wastes at the curbside, to prevent cars from running into the waste, children from playing in them, and excess pollution from rain water washing piles into storm drains.

**ARRANGE DELIVERY TO COMMERCIAL COMPOSTERS.** Commercial and institutional sources of green wastes can participate in recycling by sending them to permitted commercial composting facilities. When in doubt, call the Office of Solid Waste Management at (808) 586-4240 for a list of permitted compost facilities.

For more information on backyard composting workshops, drop-off sites, or other ways you can use to reduce or recycle green wastes, contact your county Solid Waste Division or Recycling Office.

Reference: United States. Environmental Protection Agency. Solid Waste and Emergency Response. Decision-Maker’s Guide to Solid Waste Management, Second Edition. Washington: GPO, 1995.