

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



US Composting  
Council



**US Composting  
Council**

***Seal of Testing  
Assurance***

**If it isn't STA compost....*What is it?***



US Composting  
Council

**IF IT ISN'T  
STA COMPOST ...  
WHAT IS IT?**

What are you specifying  
and purchasing for your  
landscape plantings?

**STA COMPOST:**

- Improves landscape establishment
- Improves customer satisfaction
- Makes specifying and purchasing compost easy
- Assures proper use and application

**STA PARTICIPANTS ARE QUALITY  
COMPOST PRODUCERS THAT:**

- Participate in a national program
- Test products on a prescribed schedule
- Comply with all state and federal regulation
- Follow uniform compost analysis requirements



The STA Program was developed through EPA funding  
and is supported by the US Department of Agriculture

Information and specifications:  
[www.compostingcouncil.org](http://www.compostingcouncil.org)

- **USCC Seal of Testing Assurance Program**
- Bob Engel, Chairperson  
USCC Market  
Development Comm.
- Ron Alexander &  
Al Rattie, STA Program  
Co-Managers

215-258-5259

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## Seal of Testing Assurance Program

The 'STA' program is a:

- compost testing program
- compost labeling program
- information disclosure program

It is NOT a compost standards program,  
beyond health and safety standards



## Seal of Testing Assurance Program

### PURPOSE...

- To improve customer confidence in compost selection
- To enhance compost's position as a mainstream horticultural, agricultural and retail product
- To provide analytical feedback to compost producers and data to compost users



## Seal of Testing Assurance Program

### GOALS:

- To improve overall customer satisfaction, as well as 'field' results
- To improve compost purchasing decisions
- To promote customer-oriented composters
- Move industry towards standardized test methods



## Seal of Testing Assurance Program

GOALS, cont....

- To improve and facilitate the procurement of compost products

*The STA program gives a standardized analytical report to the purchaser of compost. They can easily compare products and chose the right product to meet their needs. They will know all material submissions have had the same analytical or test method performed giving apple to apple results.*



## Seal of Testing Assurance Program

### KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS:

- Participants will regularly sample and test their product using standardized protocols
    - Testing frequency is based on the tonnage of compost produced
      - 1-6250 tons 1 per quarter
      - 6251-17500 tons 1 per 2 months
      - 17501 tons and above 1 per month
- NEW small composter category – less than 2500 tons/year**





## Seal of Testing Assurance Program

### KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS, cont'd:

- Participants must follow Program Rules and Logo Use Agreement criteria
- Annual participation fee
- Compost products are certified, not the composting facilities (feedstock, not physical manipulation dependant)



## Seal of Testing Assurance Program

### KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS, cont'd:

- Compost testing will be performed at STA Program approved labs
- Approved labs are required to use test method protocols from the TMECC manual and participate in the Compost Analysis Proficiency Program (managed by Bob Miller, Ph.D. of Colorado State University)



## Seal of Testing Assurance Program

### KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS, cont'd:

- Specific compost information will be disclosed to customers (and the USCC) using a uniform label (**Compost Technical Data Sheet - CTDS**)
  - Compost test analysis results
  - List of compost ingredients
  - End use instructions



## Seal of Testing Assurance Program

### KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS, cont'd:

- Participants will test for various parameters
  - pH, soluble salts, nutrients (N,P,K,Ca,Mg), moisture, organic matter, maturity (bioassay), stability (respirometry), particle size, pathogens & trace metals
  - All products will be required to meet 503 pathogen and trace metal requirements, as well as any state requirements



**US COMPOSTING  
COUNCIL**

*Seal of Testing  
Assurance*

Barnes – Regional Composting  
3511 West Cleveland Ave.  
Huron, OH 44839  
Telephone: 800-421-8722  
Fax: 419-433-3555

Sample Date: 8/14/02

## COMPOST TECHNICAL DATA SHEET

Compost Parameters	Reported as (units of measure)	Test Results	Test Results
<i>Plant Nutrients:</i>	%, weight basis	% wet weight basis	% dry weight basis
Nitrogen	Total N (TN or TKN+NO <sub>3</sub> -N)	.72	1.12
Phosphorus	P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub>	.13	.21
Potassium	K <sub>2</sub> O	.32	.50
Calcium	Ca	2.34	3.64
Magnesium	Mg	.57	.89
Moisture Content	%, wet weight basis	42	
Organic Matter Content	%, dry weight basis	31.31	
pH	unitless	7.4	
Soluble Salts <i>(decreased conductivity)</i>	dS/m (mmhos/cm)	3.49	
Particle Size	screen size passing through	1/2"	
Stability Indicator <i>(respiration)</i>	mg CO <sub>2</sub> -C/g TS/day, AND	.14	
CO <sub>2</sub> Evolution	mg CO <sub>2</sub> -C/g OM/day	.5	
Maturity Indicator <i>(biological)</i>			
Percent Emergence, AND Relative Seedling Vigor	average % of control, AND	92	
	average % of control	36	
Select Pathogens	PASS/FAIL: per US EPA Class A standard, 40 CFR § 503.320(a)	Pass	
Trace Metals	PASS/FAIL: per US EPA Class A standard, 40 CFR § 503.13, Tables 1 and 3.	Pass	

*Participants in the US Composting Council's Seal of Testing Assurance Program have shown the commitment to test their compost products on a prescribed basis and provide this data, along with compost end use instructions, as a means to better serve the needs of their compost customers.*

### Directions for Product Use:

**New Lawns:** Apply a 1-2" layer to soil and incorporate to a depth of 5-7", apply seed, then rake and water.

**Flower Beds:** Apply a 1-2" layer to soil and incorporate to a 6-8" depth. Condition soil this way every year to 2 years. Plant flowers and water.

**Trees & Shrubs:** Dig a hole 2/3 the depth of the root ball and at least twice as wide. Mix 1 part compost with 2 parts soil obtained from the planting hole. Place the tree or shrub in the planting hole and apply amended soil around the root ball. Firm soil occasionally and water.

**Topsoil Manufacturing/Upgrading:** Mix 1 part compost with 2 parts existing or purchased soil and blend uniformly.

**Growing Mixes:** Planter box or raised bed mixes can be produced by mixing 1 part compost to 1 part pine bark and 1 part soil, sand or expanded shale. Potting mixes should contain 1 part compost, 1 part peat moss or pine bark, and 1 part perlite, vermiculite, styrofoam, or other aggregate.

**Mulching:** Spread a 2-3" layer around trees, shrubs, and flowers. Always avoid placing mulches against plant trunks and stems.

**Garden Beds (food crops):** Apply a 1-2" layer to soil and till to a 6-8" depth. Reapply each year, or as per soil test recommendations.

NOTE: The USCC does not assure whether or not, or to what extent, these directions are sound, sufficient or otherwise appropriate. It is the participant's responsibility alone to ensure that they are.

### Compost Ingredients:

Yard trimming, food by-products

This compost product has been sampled and tested as required by the Seal of Testing Assurance Program of the United States Composting Council (USCC), using certain methods from the "Test Methods for the Examination of Compost and Composting" manual. Test results are available upon request by calling Barnes Nursery at 800-421-8722. The USCC makes no warranties regarding this product or its contents, quality, or suitability for any particular use.

*For additional information pertaining to compost use, the specific compost parameters tested for within the Seal of Testing Assurance Program, or the program in general, log on to the US Composting Council's TMECC web-site at <http://www.tmecc.org>.*

T 631.737.4931 F 631.737.4939

uscc@compostingcouncil.org [www.compostingcouncil.org](http://www.compostingcouncil.org)



US Composting Council

# Promoting the proper use of compost products





# Promoting.....



...the appropriate product for a specific use



## Seal of Testing Assurance Program

### METHODS:

#### *STA Participants will:*

- Complete on-going product testing (QC Program)
- Disclose test data results (lab analyses)
- Provide appropriate end use instructions

**Treat compost like any other retail,  
horticultural or agricultural product  
marketed in the US!**





## Seal of Testing Assurance Program - FAQ

Do you have to be a member of USCC to be in STA?

*NO – The Program is open to ALL compost producers*

What does it cost to belong?

*\$500/year USCC members OR \$650/year non-USCC members for first product (50% for each additional product)*

Do I have to be active with time commitment to the STA Program?

*NO – Your only requirement is to test your compost pursuant to the Rules Agreement and disclose this information*



## STA Program 'Stats' – 12/31/08

- Companies in the STA Program = 129
- Compost Products in the STA Program = 161
- Compost volume in the STA Program =  
Approx. 2,938,600 tons, or  
Approx. 5,877,200 cubic yards
- States with STA participants = 31
- Labs in STA Program = 11



## STA participant companies by state

- **TX\*/27**    **CA\*/23**    OR/13    **WA\*/12**
  - NC/6    IL & VA/5 each    IA/4
  - GA, MN, MO, OH/3 each
  - CO, CT, HI, WI/2 each
- \*States with DOT requiring STA compost ONLY

1 each in FL, ID, KT, MA, MD, MI, MT,  
NV, NY, OK, PA, SC, UT, VT, WY



## 2008 STA Activities

- Exhibited at 2008 national ASLA conference
- Created 2 PowerPoint presentations for STA participant use (LA and DOT)
- Created STA compost use literature
- Published articles in national media
- LA Spec. CD revised & updated
- Ongoing state DOT and LA outreach
- Designed and purchased trade show banner
- Designed and purchased trade show booth



US Composting Council

# NEW STA Exhibit – Available to Program participants





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# STA – *Look for the logo!*



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