THE GREEN BUSINESS Letter
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EPA Program Sows Seeds for Greener Landscaping

The U.S. EPA last month launched the GreenScapes Alliance, an effort to promote "the reduction, reuse, and recycling of waste materials in large land-use applications." That includes 4 million miles of roadside landscaping, brownfields, and countless office complexes, golf courses, and parks. EPA is targeting the "more than 100,000 businesses" involved in these activities.

The Alliance will provide information about the cost savings "that can be achieved from reducing material use and waste, resource conservation, and on the performance and durability of environmentally preferable products such as recycled-content and biobased products." EPA also will publicize case studies, success stories, and technical assistance, and recognize leadership organizations.

Prospective participants include about 73,000 landscape contractors, landscape care and maintenance companies and landscape installers; around 16,000 golf facilities; approximately 11,000 establishments in the highway and street construction industry that work on 4 million miles of roads; and 3,066 counties that do highway maintenance throughout the U.S.

Among the benefits of GreenScaping, says EPA, include:

• Cost Savings: GreenScaping means buying fewer products and switching from the purchase of disposable ones to those that are long-lasting and reusable. Buying durable goods might be more expensive at the time of purchase, but over the life of a landscape, maintenance, repurchasing, and tipping costs will go down. Composting instead of disposing of yard waste can save money on disposal costs. Compost adds disease-suppressing properties to soils, reducing the need for pesticides.

• Waste Reduction: Millions of tons of waste materials are hauled away, buried, or burned each day from landscaping and groundskeeping operations — trees, shrubs, brush, lumber, asphalt, and concrete, among others. Millions of gallons of excess water, pesticides, fuels, and oils are in use daily. Reducing landscape consumption can help prevent greenhouse gases, save landfill space, and preserve natural resources.

• Water Conservation: GreenScapes activities can reduce water use — for example, by maintaining an efficient irrigation system and adjusting watering times. Using native plants can reduce water, fertilizer, and pesticide needs. GreenScapes methods can reduce runoff of storm water and irrigation water that carry top soils, fertilizers, and pesticides into local rivers and lakes.

• Energy Savings: Energy is used in acquiring materials, manufacturing and shipping soil additives, water, tools, machines, paints, and "virtually every other material used in landscaping." Creating compost on-site reduces the energy needed to transport organic waste to a landfill and eliminates the need for the production and transportation of fertilizers and often pesticides. Compost also absorbs water, reducing the amount of irrigation necessary and the energy required to transport the water. Strategic planting of vegetation around buildings can reduce indoor heating and cooling needs by creating shade.

More information: *www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/green.*❖

GreenScaping Examples

• **Brownfields** undergoing remediation can benefit from compost use and provide an opportunity to incorporate recycled products.

• **Golf courses** can use biobased products and compost to replace pesticides and fertilizers, while Xeriscaping techniques reduce water use. For example, the North Shore Country Club in Glenview, Illinois, used compost as a soil amendment to reduce sodium levels at its course.

• **Green rooftops** provide many opportunities to employ GreenScapes philosophies, ranging from choosing plastic recycled-content containers to soaker hoses made from used tires.

• **Retail and commercial facilities** — shopping malls, amusement parks, and others with large-scale use of land — have the most room to incorporate GreenScapes' philosophies. For example, the vast vineyards in Northern California's wine country are using compost from food wastes to enhance soils.

• **Parks and recreation areas** can incorporate benches, tables, and structures made from recycled plastic lumber. Bike paths and walking trails can be made from rubberized asphalt, and ground rubber playground surfaces.

• **Roadside landscaping** such as compost along highway roadsides can prevent erosion and promote regrowth of vegetation. Blankets and berms made of compost can minimize or eliminate soil erosion, runoff, and nonpoint source pollution.

— Source: U.S. EPA GreenScapes Alliance