

BO YARD SMART A Guide to Environmental Gardening

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Hardscapes for a Sustainable Landscape

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Most residential landscapes include a combination of hardscapes (patios, decks, walkways and driveways) and ornamental plants. As you think about the design, construction and maintenance of your overall landscape, consider how you could make each component more sustainable.

The principles of sustainability: reduce, reuse and recycle, apply to the hardscapes used in landscaping. Reduce the amount of virgin materials used in the landscape.

Reuse existing materials when possible or select recycled products. A number of new recycled landscape products are available. Many of them are made from recycled plastics combined with wood by-products. These materials require virtually no maintenance and have a longer life span than wood, can be used for decks, fences, benches and planters and come in a variety of textures and colors.

It is often easier to evaluate the initial cost of construction materials than it is their long-term maintenance costs. However, the long-term maintenance costs of some building materials can be significant. Before you choose a product, research the initial and long-term costs as well as its recommended uses.

The hardscape options listed below vary in their sustainability and short and long-term costs. For specific information on these materials, consult a landscape construction reference or a landscape contractor.



Porous (permeable) pavement allows rain to permeate the soil and gravel layers below.

Porous Paving: This material can be used for driveways, walks or patios. It allows for water infiltration while providing a solid surface that can handle human and vehicular traffic.

Concrete Pavers: These pavers are durable, easy to install and allow for water infiltration. They come in a wide range of colors and shapes and can be used for drives, walks, patios and even sunroom or porch floors. Because they come in uniform sizes and shapes, they are relatively easy for a homeowner to install.

Concrete Slabs: The set up for pouring a concrete slab can

be labor intensive but the actual cost of the concrete is relatively inexpensive. However, the slabs are susceptible to cracking and are expensive to repair. For most homeowners, concrete pavers are a viable alternative to a concrete slab.

Wood: Decay-resistant species such as Redwood are in short supply, generally harvested from ecologically-sensitive forests and often expensive. Using redwood salvaged from other structures is a sustainable choice. Treated landscape lumber is readily available, and if maintained properly, can last 15–20 years. The safety of wood preservatives has been a subject of much controversy, particularly as it relates to disposal, accidental burning of the wood and leaching of the products into the soil. The methods and chemicals used to treat landscape lumber vary and you should consider



Concrete pavers come in uniform sizes and shapes are relatively easy for a homeowner to install and can replacement for concrete in your landscape.

these before you purchase a product.

Composite Wood: These products are relatively new for homeowners, but have been available commercially for

more than 15 years. A number of manufacturers make these products, which results in variability in their composition. In general, they all resist rot and insects and can substitute for preservative treated wood. They can be used for decks, fences and even some outdoor structures such as a gazebo. If using this product for a structure, be sure to check that it is rated for such a use.

Thoughtful consideration of hardscapes can significantly increase the sustainability of your landscape. Remember, a landscape is a long-term investment and you must consider up-front and long-term costs, both financially and to the environment, when you design and construct your landscape.



The methods and chemicals used to treat landscape lumber vary.

Good Lawn Care Practices Reduce Need for Chemicals

A healthy, dense stand of turf reduces weeds and recovers quickly from insect or disease injury. Cultural practices play a big role in the health of the lawn and need for pesticides.

Lawns requiring frequent pesticide use — in particular herbicides — may have an underlying problem causing the repeated invasions of pests, such as weeds. Correcting the problem leads to a healthier lawn that can resist weed invasions and reduce the need for chemical use.

Good lawn care practices can also save water and prepare turf for dry summer months. Taller mowing and proper fertilization result in a deep and efficient root system which reduces the need for additional water.

SOIL CONDITION

— Many lawns are growing on soils high in clay, compacted

and poorly drained. Aerating and topdressing with organic matter or screened compost may improve these conditions. Another option is starting over and amending clay soils with compost. Thoroughly preparing soils before seeding or sodding is critical.

GRASS SELECTION

— Make sure the proper grass species is used on the site. Full sun and sun/shade environments call for different grasses. Kentucky bluegrass is the primary species for lawns in full sun; in some cases mixed with perennial ryegrass and/or fine fescues. For shade areas, shade-tolerant Kentucky bluegrass cultivars are commonly mixed with fine fescues.

WATERING — Proper watering includes irrigating as lawns need it and getting moisture down into the root zone.

FERTILIZING — Proper fertilizing includes supplying adequate nutrients and proper soil pH. In particular, avoid excess or lack of nitrogen, fertilize during cooler weather (especially early and late fall) and use controlled-release nitrogen fertilizers. Don't apply high rates of nitrogen in spring.

MOWING — Proper mowing has a major impact on lawn health. Many lawns are mowed too short, allowing weeds to invade and other problems to appear. Mow between 2- and 3-inches and mow often enough so no more than one-third of the leaf blade is removed in any one cutting.

CORE AERATING — Manage lawn stress factors such as thatch, shade and soil compaction. Core aerating on a regular basis is an excellent practice to consider, in particular for sod-



Core aerators can be rented at some garden centers and rental agencies.

ded lawns over clay soils. Spring and fall are good times to aerate. Topdressing the turf with screened compost after aerating will further help relieve these stress factors.

Occasionally, problems will

still come up requiring special management. Start by identifying the problem, then look at control options — both cultural and chemical. When using pesticides read, understand and follow all label directions.

Yard Smart Resources

City of Lincoln Recycling Office

Phone: 441-8215

Web site: www.lincoln.ne.gov
— keyword “compost”

Recycling Hotline; Information on Managing Yard Waste, backyard composting, and much more; LinGro compost and wood chip availability.

UNL Extension in Lancaster County

Phone: 441-7180

Web site: lancaster.unl.edu
Educational resources on backyard composting, grasscycling, lawn chemical use, and much more.

Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department

Phone: 441-8040

Disposal Lawn Chemicals, Complaints on Backyard Composting

Lincoln Solid Waste Management Association

Phone: 475-8376

Yard Waste Collection

Nebraska Department of Agriculture

Phone: 471-2394

Information on certification for private and commercial pesticide applicators

The Water Center

472-3305

Water Conservation

Tips to Reduce Yard Waste

Yard waste can account for 20 percent of the total waste stream. Nebraska regulations prohibit sending grass and leaves to landfills during the growing season, from April 1 to November 30. By reducing or removing this waste source, the Lancaster County landfill life will be extended by 3 to 5 years. Homeowners and grounds managers can reduce yard waste with these good landscape practices.

Take the “Waste” Out of Yard Waste

Routine lawn and yard maintenance is usually on every homeowner's to-do list. Keeping the lawn neat and green can become a neighborhood goal, with everyone competing for the title of “best-kept lawn.” Reducing resources and minimizing waste in a landscape should be another worthy goal.

Reducing yard “waste” is the route more people are taking, while finding more satisfaction in routine yard care at the same time. Here's how you can reduce yard “waste” and transform it into yard “wealth.”

Use Organic Mulches — Recycle leaves, wood chips, grass clippings and other yard trimmings as mulch to retain soil moisture, reduce weed growth, moderate daily and seasonal soil temperatures and reduce soil erosion.

Plant Ground Covers — Reduce impractical lawn areas (steep slopes, shady areas, low spots) and keep tree roots moist and cool. Less lawn means fewer grass clippings. It also can reduce the amount of pesticide and fertilizer use.

Direct Down Spouts into Planting Beds or Lawns — Reduce runoff from down spouts directed onto paved surfaces which can contribute pollutants to lakes and streams. Redirect this precious natural resource to your yard rather than the pavement.

Try Natural Landscaping — Naturalize at least a portion of your yard to reduce maintenance, grass clippings, pesticide and fertilizer usage. Enjoy the attractive alternatives as your property contributes to a richer ecosystem.

Landscaping the Border of Your Yard — Perimeter plantings provide a convenient place to recycle tree trim-



Reduce impractical lawn areas by using ground covers such as hostas and lamium.

ming, leaves and garden debris. Decomposition is speeded up by cutting twigs and other materials into smaller pieces.

Select Plants for Proper Size and Vigor — Reduce trimmings by selecting dwarf varieties and always plan for the natural height of trees and shrubs before planting. Pest-resistant varieties reduce both chemical usage and the dead wood from diseased plants. Match plants to proper climate, soil, light conditions and topography.

Manage Lawn Areas Wisely — Proper care keeps lawns growing vigorously, which greatly reduces disease and pesticide use.

Fertilize Conservatively and Carefully — Test the soil and reduce fertilizer use to avoid excessive plant growth which contributes to potential

yard waste. Reuse fertilizer spilled on paved surfaces which will otherwise pollute lakes and streams via runoff water.

Use Leaves as a Resource — Small amounts of leaves, when shredded with a lawn mower, can be recycled as an organic nutrient source if left on the lawn. This reduces the frequency of raking. Leaves can be reused to mulch perimeter plantings or as an ingredient in compost.

Plan and Evaluate Your Yard — Reconsidering your routines may require a little time and discipline — as opposed to proceeding as usual. But good, environmentally-friendly ideas should emerge. The key is to lessen the waste problem in some way by first rethinking, then reduce, reuse and recycle.

Yard Waste Disposal Options

Garden waste, weeds, brush and tree trimmings over 1-inch in diameter can be disposed of in the regular trash throughout the year. The following options are available to Lincoln residents for grass and leaf materials.

48TH STREET TRANSFER STATION — For a fee, residents may dispose of grass and leaves at the 48th Street Transfer Station located approximately 1/2 mile north of 48th & Superior Streets. Grass and leaves must be free of garbage, litter and tree trimmings over 1-inch in diameter. Grass and leaves must be removed from plastic bags at the transfer station. Call 441-7738 for more information.

HIRING A LAWN CARE SERVICE — Include yard waste management in your lawn care package.

HIRING A PRIVATE HAULER — Lincoln refuse haulers offer a separate weekly pick up of yard waste to be taken to a city-operated compost site for a fee. Contact your hauler for more information. Use approved paper lawn bags available from retailers, a cart provided by the hauler, or a clean, 32-gallon trash can with a lid. Grass and leaves in plastic bags are NOT allowed at the city's compost site (plastic will not decompose in the compost mixture).

Grasscycling Has Multiple Benefits

Grasscycling, or grass mulching, is the natural practice of leaving clippings on the lawn when mowing. It is obvious how this practice can save resources such as landfill space, but there are additional benefits as well. The clippings quickly decompose, returning nutrients to the soil. Grasscycling, in conjunction with the practice of reducing water and fertilizer inputs, can reduce mowing time in addition to disposal costs.

Grasscycling can be practiced on any healthy lawn as long as responsible turf management guidelines are followed. Proper mowing, watering, and fertilizing practices result in more moderate turf growth yet still produce a healthy, green lawn.

The nitrogen contained in grass clippings removed from a lawn almost equals the recommended application rate for healthy turf (about five pounds of nitrogen per year per 1,000 square feet). While some of this nitrogen is lost through the decomposition of the clippings, leaving the clippings on the

lawn by grasscycling can have the overall impact of reducing fertilization requirements by 15–25% or more. Similar savings on water use are possible.

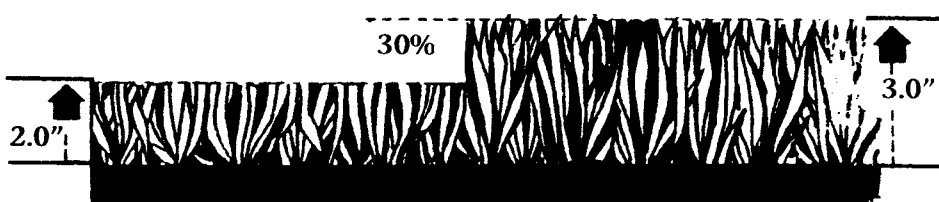
Returning clippings to the lawn usually means mowing more than once a week during the few weeks of rapid growth in spring and early summer. Grass clippings should be less than one inch, or no more than one-third of the total plant height, to ensure rapid decomposition. Mowing more frequently is not as much extra work as you might think, because lawns mowed at the proper height cut more easily and quickly. Mowing infrequently damages the lawn by removing too much of the plant at one time. When mowed regularly, clippings filter down through the grass, decompose rapidly and recycle nutrients back into the soil.



Veiki Jedlicka, UNL Extension in Lancaster County

Grasscycling Saves Lawn Care Costs

- **Fertilizer** — Grass clippings can supply up to one-third of a lawn's nitrogen fertilizer needs.
- **Time** — Recent trials confirmed leaving grass clippings on the lawn saves one-third of the mowing time.
- **Water use** — Clippings shade grass roots, cool the soil, return moisture, add moisture holding organic matter, and thereby reduce lawn watering needs.
- **Soil health** — Clippings decompose rapidly, feeding soil organisms that keep soil healthy and help prevent turf diseases.
- **Thatch** — Studies prove grass clippings do not cause thatch build-up.



Remove no more than 30% of the leaf with each mowing.

Composting Turns Yard “Waste” Into Useful Material

Compost is a mixture of partially decomposed plant material and other organic wastes. It is used in the garden to amend soil and fertilize plants. Making and using compost recycles yard wastes and reduces the burden of organic trash on our landfills.

Make Your Own Compost

Almost all organic materials will decompose. Composting hastens this natural process by creating conditions conducive to decomposition.

Composting Materials

Yard wastes, such as leaves, grass clippings, straw and non-woody plant trimmings can be composted. The predominant organic waste in most backyard compost piles is leaves. Grass clippings can be composted; however, with proper lawn management, clippings do not need to be removed from the lawn (see article on opposite page). If clippings are used for compost, it is advisable to mix them with other yard wastes.

Branches, logs and twigs greater than 1/4 inch in diameter should be put through a shredder/chipper or cut up prior to placement in the compost pile. Kitchen wastes such as vegetable scraps, coffee grounds and eggshells may also be added.

Certain organic materials should not be used to make compost because they may pose a health hazard or create a nuisance. Do not add pet feces since they may transmit disease. Meat, bones, grease, whole eggs and dairy products should not be added because they can attract rodents. Large amounts of weeds with seeds or diseased plants may create problems.

Building the Compost Pile

A compost pile should be large enough to hold heat and small enough to admit air to its center. As a rule of thumb, the minimum dimensions of a pile should be three feet by three feet by three feet (one cubic yard) to hold heat. The maximum to allow air to the center

of the pile is five feet tall by five feet wide and as long as you wish.

The compost pile can initially be prepared in layers. This will facilitate decomposition by insuring proper mixing. To build a compost pile, start with a four to six inch layer of chopped brush or other coarse material set on top of the soil. This will let air circulate under the base of the pile.

Next, add a three to four inch layer of low carbon organic material such as grass clippings. This material should be damp when added to the pile. On top of this, add a four to six inch layer of high carbon organic material (leaves or garden waste) which should also be damp.

On top of this, add a one-inch layer of garden soil or finished compost. This layer will introduce the microorganisms needed to break down the organic matter.

Mix the layers of high carbon organic matter, low carbon organic matter, and soil before adding another layer to the pile. This will ensure a speedy and even composting of the organic matter. Repeat the “layering” process until the composting bin is filled.

Microorganisms can only use organic molecules dissolved in water. A moisture content of 40–60 percent provides adequate water without limiting aeration. The “squeeze” test is an easy way to gauge the moisture content of composting materials. The material should feel damp to the touch, with just a drop or two of liquid being released when the material is tightly squeezed in the hand.

Making a Compost Bin

To save space, hasten decomposition and keep the yard looking neat, contain the compost pile in some sort



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of structure. Composting structures can be made from a variety of materials. Yard wastes can be composted either in simple holding units, where they will sit undisturbed for slow decomposition, or in turning bins which speeds up decomposition.

HOLDING UNITS — Holding units are simple containers used to store garden waste in an organized way until these materials break down. It only requires placing wastes into a pile or bin as they are generated. Decomposition can take from six months to two years. Since yard and garden wastes will be added continuously, the stage of decomposition will vary from the top to the bottom of each compost pile. Generally, the more finished compost will be found near the bottom of a pile and partially decomposed materials near the top.

TURNING UNITS — Turning units are typically a series of bins used for building and turning active compost piles. A turning unit allows wastes to be conveniently mixed for aeration on a regular basis. Turning systems require frequent maintenance and preparation of the wastes to be composted. Composting in these units is most efficiently

done in batches. Materials should be stockpiled until there is enough to fill the bin. These bins should be monitored and turned after temperatures have peaked (90°–140° F) and begun to fall. This occurs four to seven days after pile construction. Turn a second time when the temperature peaks again, four to seven days later. Compost processed this way will be ready in six to eight weeks.

Location

The compost pile should be located close to where it will be used and yet not offend neighbors. The pile will do best where it is protected from drying winds.

Screening Compost

Composting may not break down all the larger materials, such as corncobs or wood chips, in the first batch of compost that you make. When you screen your compost before use, any material larger than your screen size can be removed. These materials are called “overs” which can go back into the next compost pile you build. The overs provide bulk for aeration and microbes attached to these pieces will help jumpstart the new composting process.

The City’s Composting Operation

The City of Lincoln maintains a 16-acre yard waste compost facility next to the Bluff Road Sanitary landfill (at Highway 77 and Bluff Road). This site receives about 20,000 tons of grass, leaves and brush each year. This is equivalent to about 2,000 garbage trucks during an eight month period.

Grass is mixed with leaves and wood chips to form windrows roughly six feet high and 12 feet wide. It takes about 12 months to complete the composting process. The material is screened to remove any debris and wood chips and placed in a curing pile. This finished material



Lincoln’s 16-acre yard waste compost facility receives about 20,000 tons of grass, leaves and brush each year.

is then made available to the public as LinGro Compost.

Since the program began in October 1992, the city has composted an estimated 183,260 tons of grass and leaves and wood chipped 182,400 tons of tree debris.

The diversion of grass, leaves

and brush by the city for 13 years has added almost 1-2/3 years to the life of the sanitary landfill. If the program was discontinued and the yard waste was buried in the landfill, it would close in 2027 instead of the current projection date of 2030.

Partial funding for the city’s composting program was provided by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, Waste Reduction and Recycling Program.

TO GET LINGRO COMPOST

A list of locations to pick up or purchase LinGro compost are listed on the next page.

Kitchen Waste Composting

Food scraps contain nutrients that can be used to improve garden soils. Waste fruit and vegetables, peelings, coffee grounds, egg shells, bakery products and many other leftovers can be safely composted using proper methods. These food scraps can be composted with grass clippings and leaves to produce a rich soil additive.

Trench Composting

This is an anaerobic composting method that relies primarily on the activity of worms and other larger organisms to break down organic material. This is an excellent way to increase worm populations in your garden.

All you need is a patch of bare soil and follow these steps:

1. Dig a long trench to a depth of around 12 inches within the vegetable garden or any part of the garden you want to improve.
2. Fill the trench with kitchen scraps and soft garden clippings.
3. Sprinkle with a little fertilizer like blood meal mixed in a bucket of water.
4. Cover the food wastes in the trench with the original soil and water again.

You need to wait at least six weeks or more before planting. Legumes such as peas or beans and leafy vegetables are best.

Using Compost and Wood Chips

In addition, to the multiple benefits to using compost and wood chips, doing so recycles yard wastes and reduces the burden of organic trash on our landfills.

Adding Compost into Soil

The chief advantage of compost is its ability to improve soil structure. Good garden soil is loose and has a high water-holding capacity with adequate drainage. Adding compost to heavy clay soil improves drainage by improving soil structure. Compost also absorbs water and improves the water-holding capacity of sandy soils. To conserve moisture it is essential to have soil with good water-retention.

In addition to improving soil structure, decomposing compost will slowly release plant nutrients. Compost will not provide all the nitrogen that highly productive crops require. Organic gardeners can supplement compost applications with manure to produce good yields without the addition of other fertilizers.

Finished compost is dark brown, crumbly, and is earthy-smelling. Small pieces of leaves or other ingredients may be visible. If the compost contains many materials which are not broken down, it is only partly decomposed. Allow partly decomposed compost

particles to break down further or separate them out before using compost around growing plants.

Compost can be blended into soil mixes and is suitable for most outdoor planting projects. It is typically mixed with other ingredients such as peat moss, shredded bark, sand, or loamy topsoil when used as an outdoor planting mix. Mixing ratios vary; but 10 percent compost is considered to be a minimum, 30 percent optimum and 50 percent maximum in planting shrubs and trees.

Compost has its greatest value when rototilled directly into the soil. One cubic yard of compost covers 108 square feet at three inches, 216 at two inches, and 324 at one inch. The rule of thumb is to spread compost no more than one-third the depth of the rototiller. A one-inch layer of compost should be tilled in six inches. Making two or more passes with the tiller helps blend the compost with the topsoil and break up any clumps of material.

Locations to Pick up or Purchase LinGro Compost

- The City of Lincoln has limited quantities of organic compost, called LinGro, available to the public each spring at the N. 48 Street Transfer Station located at 5101 N. 48 Street. This material must be self-loaded and is available at no cost, on a first-come, first-serve basis. Information on loading pick-ups can be obtained by contacting the Lincoln Recycling Office, 441-8215.
- Delivery of compost within a 50-mile radius of the Bluff Road Landfill is available for a fee. Call the Lincoln Recycling Office at 441-8215 for more information.
- The following area firms have LinGro compost available for a fee: General Excavation, Nebraska Nursery and Color Gardens, Pine Valley Nursery and Landscaping, PreCast Productions, Inc., Seeds of Life. Landscapers can obtain compost upon request.
- Information on LinGro Compost is also available through the City's Web site: www.lincoln.ne.gov – keyword "compost."



Wood Chips as Mulch

Wood chip mulch is made from the chipping of tree and landscape prunings. Mulch is material placed on the soil surface for the purpose of protecting the soil and plant roots. Not only do organic mulches add a decorative natural appearance to the landscape, they also provide many landscape benefits.



Don Janssen, UNL Extension in Lancaster County

- **Helps retain soil moisture.** Mulch helps soil retain moisture and reduces water evaporation caused by wind and hot sun.
- **Reduces soil temperature extremes.** An application of mulch acts as an insulating blanket to help avoid extreme temperature fluctuations.
- **Reduces weed growth.** When the site has been properly prepared, mulching reduces weed growth.
- **Saves time in landscape maintenance.** Place mulch under and between plants in tree and shrub beds, border plantings, hedges, rose beds and fruit orchards. By replacing grass with mulch, mowing and watering time is cut dramatically.

- **Prevents direct contact with soil.** Mulch prevents vegetables from making soil contact, thus helps to reduce rot.
- **Prevents heavy rain damage.** Mulching prevents soil erosion. It permits water to seep slowly beneath the protective covering.
- **Increases survival of new trees.** Not only do mulches keep the soil cool and moist, they also keep the lawn mower and weed trimmer from damaging young bark and killing trees.
- **Gives a natural look.** A few fallen leaves in a planting bed with a wood chip mulch gives your landscape the natural beauty of a forest floor.

Wood Chips from City of Lincoln

The City of Lincoln has limited quantities of wood chip mulch on a first-come, first-served basis. Contact the Lincoln Recycling Office at 441-8215 for more information.

- Wood chip mulch is available at the N. 48th St. Transfer Station, located at 5101 N. 48th Street, and the Bluff Road Landfill, located at Highway 77 and Bluff Road (pickups and trailers or dump trucks only). There is a charge of \$5 per cubic yard. City personnel will load wood chips into open pickups or trailers.
- Individuals may also self-load wood chips at no charge at the Recycling Drop-off Site (1/2 mile north of Superior Street on North 48th Street)
- **Delivery of wood chips within a 50-mile radius of the Bluff Road Landfill is available for a fee.**

Compost Excellent Tool to Correct Soil Erosion

A recent study demonstrated the most effective approach to reduce storm water runoff and sediment erosion on slopes is to use a compost blanket approximately two-inches thick.

From April, 2004 through June 2005, the City of Lincoln and the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) conducted an erosion study comparing compost to traditional approaches of straw blankets and silt fences.

About the Study

Six test plots were constructed on a slope of 3 to 1. This is a fairly steep slope that rises about 33 feet in a horizontal distance of one hundred feet. The amount of rainfall during the study was tracked as well as the amount of run-off from each test plot during the period of the study.

Each test plot was seeded with a fescue-blend grass seed typically used by seeding contractors. The health and vig-

or of the established turf was greater in the compost amended plots than those with straw mats. The organic material in compost amended turf was almost five times more than it was for straw mat plots. This healthier turf is able to filter storm water and pollutants and hold soil better preventing sediment erosion.

The Results

This study demonstrated the use of compost as an effective approach to minimize soil erosion and stormwater run-off. In fact, the study showed applying a two-inch blanket of compost would reduce soil loss by 99.8% compared to bare soil. When compared to the traditional erosion control practice of using a straw mat and silt fence, the compost blanket decreased the amount of sediment running off on the test plot by 81%. Use of the compost blanket increased water infiltration by up to 99.3% compared to a straw mat. In other

words, only one percent of the rainfall ran off the compost blanket as opposed to 24% for the straw mat.

Compost can also be incorporated into the soil. However, it is recommended a filter berm be established at the base of any slope to minimize soil erosion prior to grass seed germination. A silt fence can be used if incorporating the compost into the soil. To produce the healthiest soil possible, soil tests can be conducted to determine the optimum application of compost.

How Compost Blankets Work

When raindrops hit soil with the vegetation removed, they dislodge and detach soil particles. This is called "splash erosion." If there is more rainfall than the ground can absorb; the resulting run-off carries the detached soil particles away. The compost blanket buffers the un-vegetated soil to help it receive

moisture, increases water infiltration into the soil and prevents the run-off velocities that carry sediment away. After vegetation growth, the compost provides both nutrients and additional organic matter to hold moisture in the soil.

An economic analysis conducted by UNL suggests a compost blanket would cost about five percent more than the traditional approach of using straw mats and silt fences. The cost analysis does not include additional seeding likely to be required in subsequent years for non-compost amended soils.

For More Information

To obtain more information on the use of compost for erosion control projects, contact the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District, 476-2729; the City of Lincoln Watershed Management Division, 441-4959 or Solid Waste Operations, 441-7043.