

# Lincoln's LinGro Recycles Grass and Leaves

## What is LinGro?

LinGro is produced primarily from grass clippings, leaves and wood chips. These materials are blended by the Public Works and Utilities Department, Solid Waste Operations. Constant monitoring is performed on all materials to ensure a consistent and high-quality product.

LinGro is a humus-like material high in organic matter. It is screened with a 1/2 inch screen to ensure uniform texture. It generally has the following characteristics:

- Total Nitrogen (N): 1.2-3.3 percent
- Phosphorus (P): 0.3-0.4 percent
- Potassium (K): 1.0-2.1 percent
- pH: 7.5-7.8

## Benefits of Using LinGro as a Soil Amendment

The clay soils that exist in Lincoln and Lancaster County can benefit from incorporating LinGro. The main advantage to LinGro is its ability to improve the soil structure. The clay soils found in Lincoln and Lancaster County are improved in the following ways.

- Increased water holding capacity of the soil.
- Addition of beneficial soil micro organisms.
- Decreased bulk density of the soils.
- Increased soil porosity.

Plants will benefit from the use of LinGro when it is properly incorporated into the soil. Among the benefits are:

- Increased root and leaf development.
- Increased flower, fruit or vegetable production.
- Increased health and vigor enabling the plant to better resist attacks of diseases and insects.

Turf also benefits from the use of LinGro properly incorporated into the soil. In addition to the benefits listed



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

above, turf becomes denser and have a darker green color when compost is used. Homeowners can also benefit through water conservation because less water runs off the yard and instead is absorbed into the root zone of the turf. Building soil health—the structure,

organic content and diverse life of the soil—is the key to growing healthy, vigorous grass that out-competes most weeds, resists disease, stands up to drought and is easy to care for.



## How to Obtain LinGro

Each spring the City of Lincoln sets aside a certain quantity of LinGro for distribution to the public at no cost. The material is available at the 48th Street Transfer Station, 5101 North 48th Street. The material is available on a first-come, first-served basis and individuals must self-load the compost.

Individuals and businesses may order LinGro directly from the City of Lincoln's compost facility. There is a

\$6 per cubic yard charge for the compost plus a delivery fee of \$50 per dump truck load. Delivery will be made anywhere in Lancaster County. Individuals may also arrange their own transportation

of the material. Individuals will need to pre-pay for the material and delivery. Persons can place an order by calling any of the following:

- Bluff Road Landfill and Compost Facility: 441-8102
- Transfer Station Supervisor: 441-8336
- Recycling Coordinator: 441-7043

## Woodchips Also Available

Woodchips can also be obtained directly through the City of Lincoln's compost facility. There is a \$5 per cubic yard charge for the woodchips plus delivery. For more information, call 441-8102.

## LinGro Recommended Application Rates

LinGro is the natural choice for improving the quality of your soil and turf. LinGro should be incorporated into the root zone of plants and turf to be most effective. For every inch of compost applied, till into six inches of soil. In heavy clay soils, it is recommended the soil be tilled first, then apply compost followed by another rototilling. This ensures the compost is thoroughly dispersed in the root zone.

**Established Lawns**—Aerate the lawn and broadcast spread LinGro approximately 1/8 to 1/4 inch deep and water thoroughly. Some professionals use a 60/40 mix of compost and sand or topsoil, which is heavier than pure compost and settles into aeration holes or thatch layers more readily. Repeat spring and fall on cool

season lawns. One cubic yard of LinGro will cover 1,296 square foot area.

**New Lawns (prior to seeding or sodding)**—Apply one-inch of LinGro over the area to be seeded or sodded. Additional compost may be applied. For every inch of compost, till 4 to 6 inches into the soil. One cubic yard of LinGro will cover a 325 square foot area. Many times home builders will dig out a basement for the home and apply the soil on the homeowners lot. For heavy clay soils it is recommended the clay soils be rototilled prior to application of the compost.

**Flower and Vegetable Gardens**—In spring or fall, apply a one to two inch layer of LinGro over the entire garden area and till into 6 to 12 inches of soil. For established

perennial flower beds, apply one inch layer of LinGro and mix lightly with existing soil. When thinning perennials mix compost thoroughly with soil in planting area.

**Trees and Shrubs**—Apply 1 to 2 inch layer of LinGro on the surface of the ground in a radius not to exceed the drip line of the plant. For best results aerate prior to application.

**House Plant Potting Mix**—LinGro generally has an alkaline pH. It may be necessary to add aluminum sulfate or some other form of water soluble acidifier in potting mixes for pH sensitive plants. Mix thoroughly (amounts listed by volume): two parts LinGro; three parts top soil; two parts peat moss; one part sand or vermiculite.

# Compost Has Many Uses

## Mulch

In nature, plants and trees drop leaves that accumulate at their bases. Every year, a new layer is added while the old layers start to decompose. This is leaf mold and it is a form of compost. What nature is doing is providing a protective layer over the roots of plants. This layer of vegetative material protects the bare soil during the summer months by reducing soil temperature, suppressing weed growth and reducing soil moisture loss. Compost can do the same thing in gardens and landscapes.

To prepare any area for mulching, first clear away grass or weeds that might grow up through the mulch. Make sure to remove the roots of tough perennial weeds.

When using compost as a mulch in flower beds, vegetable gardens, landscape beds or lawns, screen the finished compost. A simple screen can be made using 1/2-inch mesh hardware cloth and attaching it to a wooden frame. Place the screen over a wheelbarrow or other container and sift the compost into it. The large pieces left behind can go into your next compost pile as an activator, introducing the necessary microorganisms.

Cover the garden or bed area with screened compost to a depth of one to two inches. When applying compost on a lawn, be sure it is finely ground or sifted. There is less of a chance of smothering the lawn. A 1/4-inch mesh hardware cloth works even better. One

way to incorporate the compost is to aerate the sod, then apply a 1/8-inch to 1/4-inch covering of fine compost. Use a rake to distribute the compost into the corings. When mulching around trees and shrubs, screening may not be necessary. This is really a matter of aesthetic desire.

## Soil Amendment

When starting a new garden soil, amending is recommended before planting. It is so much easier to add compost now than it is after the garden is planted. Cover the garden area with 1 to 2 inches of compost and till it into the upper six inches of the soil. If the garden is already established and you want to incorporate compost deeply into the soil, your options are limited.

With perennials, every time a new plant is added to the garden or an old one is divided, add compost. With annuals, add compost every spring. Loosen up the entire area where annuals will be planted and work in compost.

Around existing trees it may be difficult to incorporate into the upper six inches of the soil. Drill 1- to 2-inch diameter holes 12 inches deep in the soil throughout the tree canopy and beyond at 18-inch spacing. Fill the bottom of each hole with recommended rates of dry fertilizer and then top off the holes with compost. For shrubs, the holes only need to be drilled 8 to 10 inches deep. This treatment should supply nutrients for two to three years.

## Using Compost in Potting Mixes

Blend fine-textured compost into potting mixtures. However, make sure the compost does not make up more than one quarter of the potting mixture's volume. Plants growing in containers are entirely reliant on the water and nutrients provided in the potting mix. Compost is excellent for container growing mixes, because it stores moisture effectively and provides a variety of nutrients not typically supplied in commercial fertilizers or soil-free potting mixes. Fertilize containers on a regular basis to provide the high volume of nutrients they need. Finely sifted compost can also be used in seed starting mixtures.

## Compost Tea

An old fashioned way of providing liquid fertilizer for plants is to brew compost tea. Similar to manure tea, compost tea gives plants a good dose of nutrients. Compost tea works especially well for providing nutrients to new transplants and young seedlings. To make compost tea fill a burlap sack or an old pillow case with finished compost

and secure the open end. Place in a tub, barrel or watering can filled with water. Agitate for a few minutes and then let it steep for a few days. Water will leach out nutrients from the compost and the mixture will take on the color of tea. Spray or pour compost tea on and around plants. Use the bag of compost for several batches. Afterwards, simply empty the bag's contents onto the garden.



To screen compost, place a 1/2-inch mesh screen over a wheelbarrow and sift the compost into it.