

**TOWNSHIP OF AUGUSTA**  
**Backyard Composting Usage Study**

**Project #: ORG R1-02**

**Prepared with funding from the Ontario Waste Diversion Organization**

**November 2000**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our goal is to establish the level of composting currently being done in the municipality, and to determine if there is an opportunity to increase the level of participation. The Township has been selling composters for years at a rate of \$15.00/composter. However the level of interest and purchases are extremely low. We believed that the best visual and promotional incentive would be to establish a community compost pile at our Maynard Landfill Site. However in order for this to be an effective tool to help divert organic waste streams we felt that it would require a core group of users to keep it active and viable.

Thus a survey was designed to help gauge the level of interest. Unfortunately, advertising and public meetings did not entice enough of a response, so we decided to approach individuals during their regular visits to our landfill sites. We requested some 200 individuals for their response and managed to get 66 interested persons. The results as seen in the attached table, show that 68% of those asked already recycle to some degree, although only 40% make it a daily exercise. It is perhaps disheartening to see that less people (45% instead of 68%) were interested in using a community compost and that it did not encourage much of the 32% that do not compost. Even considering that nearly 65% of those who do compost, do not take the time to manage their compost properly. Still almost everyone thought that a community project would be a good idea, even if they were not prepared to transport their organic garbage to the landfill site. The good news is that from the 45% of those who would use a community compost facility; 70% of them thought that it would encourage them to recycle more organic waste. A greater number of people showed an interest in retrieving compost from this facility, so an excessive buildup of organic waste should not be a problem. The survey went on to show that the composition of our compost pile should be quite balanced.

In conclusion we found that those who already compost daily are comfortable with their method and were not interested in expanding their activities to include a community wide effort. Typically those who were not interested in composting were not likely to be enticed by a community compost pile. In the end only a few people would use the site or be enticed to start composting. Perhaps it is the rural nature of our municipality that affords more land per household or the "live off the land" attitude that is afforded by a rural setting, but there is evidence to suggest that rural people already manage to a great extent their own organic waste.

# FINAL REPORT

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Our goal is to establish the level of composting currently being done in the municipality, and to determine if there is an opportunity to increase the level of participation. The Township has been selling composters for years at a rate of \$15.00/composter. However the level of interest and purchases are extremely low. We believed that the best visual and promotional incentive would be to establish a community compost pile at our Maynard Landfill Site. However in order for this to be an effective tool to help divert organic waste streams we felt that it would require a core group of users to keep it active and viable.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

A survey was designed to help gauge the level of interest. Unfortunately, advertising and public meetings did not entice enough of a response, so we decided to confront individuals during their regular visits to our landfill sites. We requested some 200 individuals for their response and managed to get 66 interested persons. The survey was kept short so that responses would be higher. It would have been useful to know if there are any Provincial targets specifically related to Organic Waste when we were articulating the questions. See Schedule B for a copy of the survey questioned to individuals.

## 3. RESULTS

A summary of the surveys collected is shown on Schedule A. In general they show that 68% of those asked already recycle to some degree, although only 40% make it a daily exercise. It is perhaps disheartening to see that less people (45% instead of 68%) were interested in using a community compost and that it did not encourage much of the 32% that do not compost. Even considering that nearly 65% of those who do compost, do not take the time to manage their compost properly. Still almost everyone thought that a community project would be a good idea, even if they were not prepared to transport their organic garbage to the landfill site. The good news is that from the 45% of those who would use a community compost facility; 70% of them thought that it would encourage them to recycle more organic waste. A greater number of people showed an interest in retrieving compost from this facility, so an excessive buildup of organic waste should not be a problem. The survey went on to show that the composition of our compost pile should be quite balanced.

I believe the survey shows that while there may be general support for the idea, not many people would use the facility. However the cost of filling in our landfill sites as opposed to running such a facility may not be so significant, as to make it unviable. Brush being the largest of fillers, should definitely be shredded or chipped. But what do you do with it? We may just decide to run a compost facility to manage the brush problem.

#### **4. TRANSFERABILITY**

Augusta is a rural municipality with rural villages sparsely scattered between it's borders. Lot sizes are typically greater than 1 acre with many large farming operations and many more hobby farms. There is one village with smaller lot sizes closer to a town or city. This may usually develop concerns that are different than the rest of the municipality. The results that were gathered should be fairly typical to other municipalities of a rural nature.

**Appendix A**  
**Organic Waste Study - Augusta Township**  
**October 05 - November 13**

Number of Households surveyed	Question	yes	no
66	Do You Compost?	45	21
45	How often do you compost?	Daily	27
45		Weekly	13
45		Monthly	3
45		Seldom	2
45	Do you include the following in your compost?	Leaves	29
45		Grass	25
45		Garden Waste	29
45		Fruit / Vegetables	36
45		Flour / Grains	16
45		Coffee	29
45		Food (no fats)	22
45		Egg Shells	24
45		Tobacco	0
45		Other	3
66	Would you use a community compost?	30	31
30	If so, ... would a community compost entice you to compost more?	21	9
66	Would you retrieve compost from the community facility?	45	12
66	Do you support the idea of running a community compost?	50	10

Typical comments suggested during the survey...

- were reasons why persons would not use a community compost facility such as inconvenience of transportation, uncertainty as to the composition of the compost, or preference to their home initiatives.
- were preferences to curb side pick up or closer facilities to villages than our landfill site.
- wanted greater emphasis and resources to go toward recycling efforts.
- were some positive suggestions that we should have considered composting community wide a long time ago, and were enthused by the idea.