



## Be a Good Neighbor

Being a “good neighbor” is vital for the long-term sustainability of all community compost sites. Neighbor concerns will arise and it’s up to site coordinators and the compost team to respond to these concerns.

### Some Ways to Communicate with Neighbors:

- Consider developing a short flyer describing what community composting is, the proposed site & compost system to be used. Be sure to welcome neighbor input & let them know how they might speak with a site coordinator.
- Hold an open house on the site & invite the neighborhood, community supporters & leaders, potential funders, volunteers, etc.
- Be sure that all Compost Team members know about site specifics & feel comfortable communicating with neighbors who may have questions or issues.
- Be ready to respond to common concerns from neighbors, such as whether rodents & other wildlife could be attracted to the site, potential odors, increased neighborhood traffic, etc.



Photo Cr.: Vermont Community Gardens Network, CTG Potluck

### Building Neighbor Support

Practice transparency at all times—communicating early and often will help neighbors understand the value of community composting and what to expect at the site. If compost team members are approachable, neighbors are more likely to ask questions before misunderstandings or misinformation take hold.

### Key Communication Points:

#### Describe the community compost system.

Here are some examples:

- An enclosed compost tumbler (or bin) will be used to compost food scraps.
- Compost tumblers are vector resistant, significantly reduce odors, & are managed to fully decompose food scraps within a couple weeks. Once the food scraps are no longer identifiable, the contents will be moved to enclosed bins to finish the composting process.
- We won’t have any motorized equipment onsite for our compost system.

#### Tell people what materials (“feedstocks”) are accepted at your site, and how they’ll be managed.

Here are some examples:

- Food scraps will be placed into a collection bin & covered with a layer of sawdust (to add a “biofilter” for additional odor control); our compost team will then incorporate the material from the collection bin into the *(fill in your system type – enclosed compost tumbler, enclosed compost bin, ...)* & mixed with other carbon materials, including *(fill in the blank – dry leaves, wood chips, ...)*.

- Food scraps will be placed directly into the (*fill in your system type – enclosed compost tumbler, enclosed compost bin, ...*) & then mixed with sawdust & other carbon materials, including (*fill in the blank – dry leaves, wood chips, ...*). Our compost team will check in regularly to make sure that the recipe is working well.

**Note:** All food scraps are compostable. However, we do not recommend that meat be accepted initially – at least not until the compost team has gained confidence in effectively managing the system for hot composting.

### Tell people when site members will be visiting the site.

Here are some examples:

- People will be dropping off their food scraps on (*fill in the schedule for your site – for example Wednesdays & Saturdays, between 9 am & noon*). Members of our compost team will be there to supervise the drop-off & ensure that the food scraps are incorporated into the compost system in a timely manner.
- Members of our compost site have been trained & can bring food scraps to our site when it's convenient for them. Our compost team will check on the compost system regularly to make sure that the recipe is working well, & will move the contents from (*tumbler to bin, one bin to another, ...*), as needed.
- If appropriate, let neighbors know where participants/team members will park their cars.

### Other Commonly Shared Information:

- Our tumbler & compost bins are/will be enclosed by a fence (or out of view, etc.).
- Our compost team has been/will be fully trained by compost professionals & will have ongoing support & technical assistance, as needed.
- Our collection will start small—with just (*fill in the blank – for example, our community garden members, students, cohousing residents, etc.*) contributing food scraps. If the compost system works well & there are no issues, we may consider adding additional participants. Let us know if you are interested!
- We (will) keep a logbook of the materials composted, compost temperatures & other system metrics, & any issues that arise (e.g., odor), & how these were addressed.
- We invite all of our neighbors to give us feedback, please let us know if there are issues, or if we can answer any questions.

**“Proactively talking with your neighbors and fellow community members, taking the time to explain what you’re doing and why – can save a world of heartache down the road. Plus – learning to be a good neighbor can open new partnerships in unlikely places.”**

**— Comment during a community composting training**

Other Community Composting Tip Sheets to consult: [Community Compost Systems & Operations](#); [Community Composting Feedstocks & Overview of Compost Recipe Development](#); [Community Composting Record Keeping Essentials](#).

Written with funding from a USDA Rural Utilities Solid Waste Management Grant. NERC is an equal opportunity employer and provider.