

Food Waste Recovery

In a Nutshell

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, food waste accounts for about 22 percent of all waste going into municipal landfills. In the Missouri Statewide Waste Composition Study published in 2018, food waste was identified to be the most prevalent material, accounting for 15% of the statewide municipal solid waste stream. Reducing food waste saves money, which is good for consumers, and reduces methane emissions, which is good for the environment. Much of the food waste can be composted, which is also good for the environment. Finally, donating surplus food to those in need helps our communities and keeps the unused items out of landfills.

The “How To”

Reducing Food Waste

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) maintains a comprehensive website on [Sustainable Food Management](#). An emphasis is placed on food waste reduction, as illustrated in the Wasted Food Scale below. Click on the Wasted Food Scale to browse EPA recommendations for each level. Below the graphic are some St. Louis regional resources.



Source Reduction

Earthday365 conducts education on household reduction of food waste. You can follow their campaign on

social media with #toogoodtowaste or visit their website [here](#).

Feed Hungry People

One of the easiest ways to prevent food waste is to donate any extra, untouched food items that will not be used. Throughout the St. Louis region, there are many places that will accept food donations, including [Operation Food Search](#), the [St. Louis Area Food Bank](#), and [Feeding Illinois](#). Donating your extra food is an easy way to not only reduce food waste, but to also help others within the community.

Composting Food Waste

Compost is organic matter that when added to soil helps plants grow. Composting is a simple and efficient way to turn yard waste and food scraps into a beneficial soil amendment. Organic matter in compost improves soil aeration, root penetration, and water infiltration. It also reduces crusting of the soil surface. Compost will occur naturally, but there are devices and methods that can be used to start and aid the composting process. Visit the OneSTL [Composting tool](#) to learn more.

Food Waste Recycling Ordinances and Legislation

In 2012, the Vermont legislature unanimously passed [Act 148](#), which is a universal recycling and composting law. Along with cardboard, paper, and plastic recycling legislation, the Act aims to forbid food scraps from going into landfills by July, 2020.

[Section 9-3.5](#) of the Revised Ordinances of the City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii, requires certain hotels, restaurants, grocery stores, hospitals, food courts, and food manufacturers and processors to compost food waste.

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Case Studies

Food Waste Composting

Contact

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Description

Schlafly restaurants began a food waste recovery project when they received a grant from the St. Louis-Jefferson Solid Waste Management District in 2009. It was a pilot composting grant (Post-consumer Food Waste Composting) in that plate scrapings (post-consumer) from the restaurants (in addition to all other food -- including meat, bones, dairy, baked products, etc., were collected and sent to a commercial composting operation. This did not include vegetable and fruit preps scraps at the Bottleworks, which are composted on-site at the Gardenworks restaurant garden. In the current program, food scraps are brought back to the kitchen dishwashing area when tables are cleared. The plates are then scraped into green bins, as are scraps from the food preparation area. Those are then emptied into the yellow totes provided by Blue Skies Recycling. The Bottleworks Restaurant also uses compostable straws.

Cost

Some facilities can offset the charges for separate collection of food waste by using smaller trash dumpsters. Separate collection of organics costs approximately two to three thousand dollars a year.

Lessons Learned

One of the challenges is to minimize contamination through signs and visible containers. The realities of busy restaurants are pretty crazy, so even well-intentioned employees can put things into the compost bins that don't belong.

Metal dumpsters don't work well for food waste due to difficulty in cleaning, moving around, and the odor. Blue Skies Recycling provides 65 gallon totes for compostables. When these are collected, they drop off clean ones at the same time. The amount of totes and frequency of service are based upon need. The totes are not leaky or messy and the smell – an issue in the warmer months – is kept in check by the lids.

Integration of Additional Organics into Yard Waste Collection

Contact

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Description

Clayton residents include compostable materials with yard waste for pickup. Compostable materials include leaves, sod, grass clippings, wood chips, saw dust, vegetables, fruit, paper, straw, empty egg shells, hair, dryer lint, coffee grounds, tea leaves and vacuum cleaner dust.

Cost

The City of Clayton added additional organics to the yard waste collection program at no additional cost.

Lessons Learned

The City of Clayton has not experienced any problems by adding additional organics to the yard waste collection program.