

Fall Composting

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Fall leaves and the plentiful manure from our horses provide great sources for starting a fall compost heap. By combining leaves with nitrogen rich materials such as manure, grass clippings and food scraps, you can start a compost pile that, even with minimal management, could be completed compost within a year, ready to be incorporated into your gardens and landscaping. For more information on making compost on a backyard scale, see:

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/garden/07212.pdf>
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/garden/07743.pdf>

According to CSU Coop Extension, on average, one horse generates over 5 cubic feet of manure (about 550 pounds) of manure per week. Add that to the amount of shavings used per week – 3-6 cubic feet – and you have much more material than your little compost pile can handle. For large-scale horse operations with large-scale horse by-products, the large quantities of manure and shavings can be composted effectively on site by using dynamic windrows.

Dynamic windrows are large compost heaps, usually 4-8 feet tall, 10-20 feet wide, and 10-200 feet long. Windrows allow horse manure to compost effectively, thus making it more desirable to spread into pastures or arenas and more desirable to sell to farmers, landscapers and gardeners. Because the size of windrows exceeds the workload of a manure fork and wheelbarrow, windrows work best for farms that have plenty of space and access to a bucket loader. Windrows need to be turned and watered, and have nitrogen sources added as necessary. They need to be placed in a space protected from wind. Overall, dynamic windrows are one way to manage large quantities of manure responsibly and turn it into a useable resource.

For more information on composting horse manure on a larger scale with the use of dynamic windrows, check out the CSU Coop Extension on the Web at:

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/livestk/01225.pdf>

