



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
Sept. 27, 2010

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### **State Health Department Encourages North Dakotans to Compost Yard Waste**

BISMARCK, N.D. – With fall cleanup upon us, the North Dakota Department of Health encourages residents to compost yard waste, support compost programs, and use compost to enrich and fertilize soil.

“Yard waste compost is nature’s best fertilizer and soil enhancer,” said Steve Tillotson, manager of the department’s Solid Waste Program. “Composting yard waste recycles precious nutrients and organic matter, conserves fossil fuels used to produce fertilizer and saves landfill space.

Composting is the breakdown of organic materials by soil bacteria, producing humus or soil organic matter. Compost makes soil richer for plants. Potentially, anything that grows in your backyard is food for composting.

Like other living things, the organisms in a compost pile need water, air and a balanced diet – a mixture of green forage high in nitrogen (such as grass) and brown material high in carbon (such as dead leaves, straw and newspaper). A properly operated compost pile does not generate odors and saves the homeowner from the chore of bagging bulky materials like leaves and grass clippings.

Composting yard waste this fall and winter will result in material for your garden, lawn and landscaping needs next summer. Follow these composting tips:

- Place compost in a bin or fenced area of your yard.
- Collect leaves and grass by mowing or raking. Mowing chops up leaves and mixes in grass clippings, making good compost medium.

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- Place materials in layers, adding water to each layer. If the material becomes soggy, you've added too much water.
- Turn the material periodically to provide air; add water or more material as needed.
- Don't worry if your compost pile freezes over the winter; it will become active again once it thaws.
- Check the compost pile during the spring thaw; if the compost is excessively wet, turn it and add more dead leaves, straw or newspaper to soak up the moisture.
- Vegetable matter from the kitchen can be composted; however, do not place meat, grease or dairy products into a compost pile.

Many communities have compost programs for recycling grass and leaf materials. If you do not want to compost in your yard, consider supporting local compost programs to help keep your community green. Grand Forks and Fargo are two of several North Dakota cities that have composting programs.

“The city of Grand Forks Sanitation Division has collected 2,146 tons of grass clippings, garden material and leaves and 1,754 tons of woody material,” said Todd Feland, Public Works director for the City of Grand Forks. “The city beneficially augments topsoil with compost for landfill closure projects. In addition, compost is provided to residents on an as-requested basis.”

Grand Forks has 11 drop sites (including the landfill) for grass clippings, garden material and leaves and four drop sites (including the landfill) for woody material. The city offers free-of-charge residential collection of grass clippings May through September and residential leaf collection in October. The city offers year-round residential woody material collection for a minimum fee of \$15 per load.

Last year, the city of Fargo diverted 6,358 tons of wood waste for grinding. About 5,424 tons were marketed as a fuel source and the balance marketed or given to residents as mulch and landscaping material. A total of 9,149 tons of yard waste also was diverted and used to create compost.

“The Fargo landfill encourages residents to compost through the city’s voluntary composting program,” said Brady Brunsvold, recycling coordinator for the city of Fargo. “Residents can drop off their lawn and garden debris at the Fargo landfill or one of the 14 drop sites at no cost. The city saves the residents time and effort by making the compost for them. Fargo residents may pick up one yard of the finished compost from the landfill for free twice per year. The compost is even loaded for the residents – no shovels are required!”

To find local sources of compost or for a pamphlet about composting, contact your local solid waste program or the North Dakota Department of Health at 701.328.5166.

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