



**US COMPOSTING
COUNCIL**

*Seal of Testing
Assurance*

If it isn't STA compost.....

What is it??

Seal of Testing Assurance (STA) Program Details

What is Compost?

Compost is the product resulting from the controlled biological decomposition of organic material that has been sanitized through the generation of heat and 'processed to further reduce pathogens' (PFRP), as defined by the U.S. EPA (Code of Federal Regulations Title 40, Part 503, Appendix B, Section B), and stabilized to the point that it is beneficial to plant growth. Compost bears little physical resemblance to the raw material from which it originated. Compost is an organic matter source that has the unique ability to improve the chemical, physical, and biological characteristics of soils or growing media. It contains plant nutrients but is typically not characterized as a fertilizer.

Compost Definition: Modified from: The U.S. Composting Council's (USCC) Field Guide to Compost Use

Key Elements of the STA Program:

- 1 All enrolled manufacturers or marketers ("Participants") will regularly sample and test their compost products based on production volumes, or as otherwise prescribed by the STA program administrators **for each facility they enroll.**
- 2 Participants will complete test analyses for the compost properties listed below.** **ALSO**, any and all testing required by applicable State and/or Federal regulation (e.g., pathogens, heavy metals, pesticides, inerts, etc.) to assure public health/safety and environmental protection must be completed **at the frequency so regulated.** It is not necessary to provide laboratory analysis for particle size. The participant must simply report the screen size in which the product passes during screening.
- 3 All lab analyses will be conducted at 'approved laboratories' which have certified that they are capable of performing the test methods specified in the Program Rules. **A list of approved program laboratories will be made available to Participants and can be found on the USCC website.** Test methods used in the Seal of Testing Assurance program are found in the Test Methods for the Examination of Compost and Composting Manual (TMECC), jointly published by the USDA and the USCC (2002 publishing as a part of the USDA National Resource Conservation Technical Bulletin Series).
- 4 The Participants, or their compost testing lab, will provide the appropriate lab analyses results (and updated Compost Technical Data Sheet) to the USCC at the prescribed frequency. **This data will not be distributed to compost customers by the USCC.** This responsibility lies solely with the program Participants.

** Composts produced from yard trimmings, manure, or food residuals may test for pathogens and trace metals at half the required frequency.



- 5 All Participants will make test results available to any person, upon request, using the STA Program’s “Compost Technical Data Sheet”. The Compost Technical Data Sheet includes directions for product use, a list of product ingredients and analytical test results. **The USCC will not assess whether or not, or to what extent, these directions are appropriate; this is solely the responsibility of the Participant.**
- 6 A Participant’s composting facility must certify that it is in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations with respect to the certified compost product(s), and it must remain compliant to remain in the STA Program.
- 7 The USCC will certify an applicant’s compost product on the basis of the criteria specified in the “Program Rules”, allowing Program involvement with respect to the approved product, and use of the STA Program Logo, promotional opportunities, etc. If a compost manufacturer or marketer represents multiple facilities, the compost product from each individual facility requires separate enrollment in the Program. Where more than one compost product (significantly varied feedstocks) is produced at a given facility, each individual compost product must be enrolled in the Program. **However, products that are simply re-screened or further aged (cured) to produce addition products, are not required to be enrolled separately.**
- 8 Participants will pay an annual STA Program application fee of \$650 per product. Participants who are USCC members will receive an application fee discount of \$150 per product (\$500). This discount reflects the extent to which USCC members’ dues underwrite the development and management of the STA Program.
- 9 Participants have the right to use the STA Program Logo in their promotional activities, with respect to certified compost product(s), as long as they stay compliant with the program rules.

Required Customer Information:

Information to be placed on the product bag or literature, or by using the Seal of Testing Assurance’s Compost Technical Data Sheet:

- 1 The Seal of Testing Assurance logo, accompanied by the following written statement:

“This compost product has been sampled and tested as required by the Seal of Testing Assurance Program of the United States Composting Council (USCC). Test results are available upon request by calling (Licensee Name) at (Telephone Number). The USCC makes no warranties regarding this product or its contents, quality, or suitability for any particular use.”
- 2 Directions for product usage.
- 3 An ingredient statement

Compost Testing Frequency Table:

The initial frequency of testing required by Participants is based on the volume of compost produced annually, **per facility:**

<i>Compost Quantity</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1 - 6250 tons	1 per quarter
6251 - 17500 tons	1 per 2 months
17501 tons and above	1 per month



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Certified Compost Products will be analyzed for the following properties:

pH	bioassay (maturity)
soluble salts	stability
nutrient content (total N, P ₂ O ₅ , K ₂ O, Ca, Mg)	particle size (report only)
moisture content	pathogen (Fecal Coliform or Salmonella)
organic matter content	trace metals (Part 503 regulated metals)

STA Program Participant

Promotional Opportunities and Benefits

The USCC will continually promote the STA Program logo and participants to end users and specifiers, thereby improving the value of the program to compost manufacturers and marketers.

Program Promotional Efforts:

- 1 Inclusion in STA section of the USCC's web-page - providing information on the program, containing a map of Participants, technical information on the program's required testing parameters, etc.
- 2 Provide list of complying STA Program Participants to inquiring end users and specifiers.
- 3 Distribute press releases to end user and specifier trade associations describing the program, new participants and the web-page address.
- 4 Publish promotional articles in relevant end user and specifier magazines and publications explaining the Program and listing participants.
- 5 Develop both end user specific AND standard presentations explaining the Program, for use by both STA staff and program participants to present at relevant conferences.
- 6 Include list of STA Program Participants with appropriate USCC publications that are sold (e.g., Landscape Architecture Specifications for Compost Utilization, Compost Use Guidelines and The Field Guide to Compost Use).
- 7 Provide a list of STA Program participants to state composting organizations for distribution and promotion.
- 8 Promote STA Program and Participants through involvement at relevant end user and/or specifier trade shows.
* The USCC is promoting the STA Program and Participants at the American Society of Landscape Architects and the Garden Writers Association of America National Conferences.
- 9 Promote Participants to landscape architects and landscape designers, as well as garden writers, and organizations that sell landscaping specifications to the landscape/construction industry.
- 10 Promote STA Program Participants to state departments of transportation.



- 11 Work with state departments of transportation and private landscape architects to have **ONLY** STA certified compost approved for use on landscape projects.
- 12 Provide Participants with ad slicks or an electronic file of the program logo, and other promotional tools for use in their own in-house marketing efforts.
- 13 Provide Participants an STA Program logo sign for their promotion displays.
- 14 Assist Participants in establishing their own 'in-house' STA Program related promotional program.
- 15 Provide standardized STA Program promotional and explanatory literature (templates) to Participants for use in the promotion of their product to end users and specifiers.

Additional Participation Benefits Being Considered for 2002:

- 16 Complete STA Program promotional mailings to landscape architects (ASLA members) in states where STA Program participants exist.
- 17 Complete a yearly evaluation of all compost products within the STA Program, allowing participants to generically compare their products to other products within the Program.

Getting Started in the STA Program...

STA Program Participant Checklist

Date Completed

- 1 **Submit a 1 gallon sample** of finished compost to an approved **STA Program lab of your choice. Be sure to follow the proper compost sampling and handling protocols information provided with your "Program Rules"**. Include with this sample the following information:
 - Completed chain of custody form (check BOTH STA AND 503 analyses) _____
 - Complete back of form listing composting facility name, contact information, etc. _____
- 2 **Complete and submit** the following forms to the **STA program Manager:**
 - Program Application ("Application for Participation" - located in the Appendix of the Program Rules document). Submit the original and retain 1 copy for your records. _____
 - Compost Technical Data Sheet. It is **NOT** necessary to complete the test results part of this form if you have not received your lab results yet. All paperwork will be processed and final approval will be issued by the STA Program Manager upon receipt and review of these lab results. _____
 - A 1 quart sample of finished compost for internal Program review _____
 - Appropriate STA participant fee (\$500 for USCC members, \$650 for non-members per product) _____
 - Please forward the information listed above to: Al Rattie, 29 E. Ridge Ave., Sellersville, PA 18960 _____

For additional information, contact the STA Program Managers: Al Rattie at 215-258-5259 (turflife@aol.com) or Ron Alexander at 919-367-8350 (alexassoc@earthlink.net), or log onto the USCC website at www.compostingcouncil.org.