

## Compost

# Fact Sheet



Crews from the Atlantic County Utilities Authority collect yard waste in Absecon, Brigantine, Buena Vista Township, Egg Harbor City, Hamilton Township, Linwood, Northfield, Ventnor and Weymouth Township throughout the year. At different times of the year, ACUA sees a variety of materials. In the spring and summer months, it is mostly brush and grass, whereas in the fall it is mainly leaves.

As the trees change color and the leaves begin to fall, residents begin to clean up their yards and sidewalks. The leaf season historically begins around Election Day, and ACUA handles approximately 4,500 tons of material from its customers during this period. Residents place their leaves at the curb for ACUA crews to collect. Some use containers, some use plastic bags, but the most informed residents use biodegradable Kraft (paper) bags.



A Scarab machine turns the leaf windrows as it passes over. The steam is a result of the heat contained in the decaying leaf piles.

ACUA's compost site can not accept material that is not compostable. This means that leaves placed out for collection in plastic bags must be "purged" or emptied from the plastic bags before they can be placed in the compost site. Because of this, it is not uncommon to see ACUA crews in various towns, out in front of a residence purging the leaves from what can be more than 100 bags placed out for collection. This is a very time consuming process for the crews and the plastic bags end up in the landfill, where they may sit for years and take up much needed space because they do not readily decompose. ACUA has joined with a number of towns to educate residents on the use of the Kraft bags as an environmentally friendly and cost efficient way for the crews to collect the leaves. Many Atlantic County towns have made the Kraft bag collection system mandatory, completely eliminating the use of plastic bags.



**Atlantic County Utilities Authority**  
**www.acua.com**



All EcoSoil goes through a McCloskey screener to remove any impurities. (Below) A bag of 100% natural EcoSoil.



After the leaves are collected, they are transported to the compost site at ACUA’s Environmental Park. Here they may be ground up using a Vermeer grinder and mixed with other yard waste, or they may be placed directly into existing “windrows” (rows of material that are about six feet high and about 500 feet long) where the material decomposes. During this period of decomposition, the windrows must be “turned” weekly to aid in the process, as well as to keep odors to a minimum. A windrow turner, manufactured by Scarab, is used to perform this function.

After curing for approximately six months, the material in the windrows is processed using a McCloskey screener to create the finished product, EcoSoil.

EcoSoil is a trademarked material that is a 100% recycled natural compost product sold by ACUA. It is an ideal organic medium for top dressing lawns and gardens, and for planting trees and shrubs. Each year more than 20,600 tons of yard waste are processed and more than 6,500 cubic yards of this material is sold to area landscapers and residents. This material, if it was not composted, would otherwise go into the landfill.

For more information on Eco products, please visit the ACUA at: [www.acua.com](http://www.acua.com).

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