

## Composting Plant Material in Midland

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Midland is known for its industry: The Dow Chemical Company, the Dow Corning Corporation and was known for years as "The Chemical City". The area inside the city limits is about 60% forested and lends a charm to the Chemical City. We now have another attraction. "The Tridge", a three-legged bridge that's the focal point in a recreation area of about 400 acres in size.

We, in Midland, were originally drawn here because of the Forest, our citizens enjoy and nurture those surroundings and we have the designation "Tree City U.S.A." We have an aggressive tree planting program that plants about 1500 street trees and 300-400 park trees annually. Likewise, each fall we enjoy "Fall Out". This golden treasure, better known as leaves, were recognized as a resource in 1968 when our present composting program began. Since that time, we have collected over 650,000 cubic yards of leaves and returned in excess of 150,000 cubic yards of composted soil amendment to our landscapes.

The Department of Public Works collects an average of 40,000 cubic yards of leaves over an eight week period in October and November, delivers it to any of four areas for composting. The program, started in 1968, initially was designed to better use our equipment and use it during a time when it would have been idle.

The leaf material is either "windrowed" in piles 12 to 14 feet high, 20 to 30 feet wide and length determined by size and configuration of the site. The "windrows" are aerated when possible, averaging 4 turnings per year. This is done winter when ground is frozen and snow is plowed into windrow to add moisture. Turn around time depends on needs, loading of site and whether needed for projects.

Ocasionally, we get overloading of a site, so we have tree nursery land that is available for sheet composting. Presently we have about 200 acres of land available for this purpose. However, an aggressive composting program could turn around the 40,000 cubic yards of leaves in one season on about 20 acres of all weather site.

We use sawdust, sewage sludge (ZIMPRO), stump chips and waste sod also added to the leaf compost. Sewage sludge is composted separately and used only on landscape projects, tree planting and sod renovation.

We make leaf compost available to the public at one site free of charge. We haven't started a grass clipping composting program yet because it's produce while our staff is also cutting grass. In the future, if manpower becomes available it could be recovered also.

The whole concept was not to "Recyle" or "Save a Landfill", but more to utilize an extremely valuable resource.