

### Vermicomposting Food Scraps

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#### **The Problem**

The Grounds Department at North Shore Country Club continues to search for ways of implementing environmentally friendly practices. Throwing away pounds of food scraps every day is an expense and waste of resources

#### **The Solution**

A couple winters ago, North Shore Country Club built three vermicomposting bins to manage food waste. Each day, food waste – excluding meat and dairy products – is collected from the kitchen at North Shore Country Club and placed into rectangular vermicomposting bins. Vermicomposting is a process that uses worms and microorganisms to convert food waste into compost. Worms ingest organic material like food scraps – consuming the equivalent of their weight in food every day – and excrete castings that can be used as a nutrient-rich soil amendment. Vermicompost has been studied by many scientists and is recognized as a nutrient-rich, organic material teeming with billions of beneficial microorganisms that promote both soil and plant health. Data supports that quality vermicompost reduces both water and fertilizer needs and improves drainage by enhancing soil structure. Many studies also demonstrate that beneficial microorganisms in vermicompost may suppress diseases.

#### **The Results**

In addition to generating a valuable soil amendment, vermicomposting has reduced the volume of waste being hauled offsite at the expense of the course. As little as 10 percent vermicompost blended with sand provides a wonderful divot mix, topdressing material or soil amendment. Also, compost tea is used at North Shore Country Club to stimulate turf growth in problem areas of the golf course.

Onsite test plots were established to compare vermicompost amendments with peat, an industry-standard amendment that is becoming increasingly sensitive to harvest from the wild. General observations from using vermicompost include enhanced turf establishment, reduced fertilizer and water needs and improved overall plant health.



**Figure 1 - Red wrigglers transform organic kitchen waste into a biologically active, nutrient-rich soil amendment called vermicompost.**