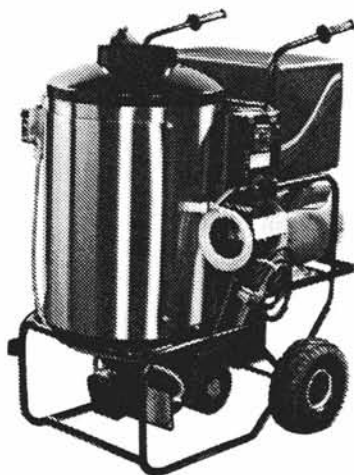


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Grass Composting Principles

by Ray S. Ayer

1. Keep proper carbon/nitrogen ratio
2. provide aeration to keep material aerobic
3. provide 60% moisture
4. provide and maintain bacterial populations

1. Grass is very high in nitrogen and will give off ammonia gas and other smells like silage if not fixed with carbon. 30 parts carbon to 1 part nitrogen (30/1 ration). This translates out to about 2 parts leaves to 1 part grass. If leaves are not available cornstalks, sawdust, straw, dead weeds or other high carbon materials **must** be used. Grass alone **cannot** be successfully composted without having a slimy stinky mess.

CARBON TO NITROGEN RATIOS

grass clippings	20:1
green leaves	40:1
dry leaves	80:1
sawdust/wood chips	500:1
dry straw	100:1
cow manure	20:1

2. If the material is not turned and mixed it **will** go anaerobic and smell bad. The entire pile must be mixed and turned once or twice a week. Leaves alone may be turned 3-5 times per year. The site must allow equipment to turn the material under varying weather conditions.

3. Material should be damp but not wet. This allows maximum bacterial action to break down the material. In the spring the material may stay wet enough, but if it gets too wet it drives out the oxygen and it will go anerobic. In the summer it may dry out and slow down the bacterial break down process. Water must be added to the center of the pile. The material may be turned during a rain storm if conditions allow.

4. The bacteria to digest anything is already on that thing. Thus the natural bacteria are already present, however conditions must be maintained to allow them to thrive and multiply. "Starters" are not normally needed although soil or manure may be added to give it a boost.

The above requires the application of the M & M's principle. Money, manpower, and motivation. None of the above will happen if the program is squeezed in between other duties. A person must be put in charge with adequate time, management support and money.

Credit: Patch of Green, 8/91

Joseph Cain and Craig Gibson Receive Nor-Am Scholarships

John Turner, sales representative for Nor-Am Chemical Company presented two \$500.00 scholarships to senior, Joseph Cain and Craig Gibson from Purdue University. Both students were recognized at the Midwest Regional Turf Conference held in Indianapolis on January 21, 1992. The annual scholarship assists turfgrass students in meeting their educational needs and their professed interest in turfgrass management.