

GREEN INDUSTRY SHOWCASE

New compost bin designed to make backyard recycling easy, affordable

A compost bin that you recycle.

That's what Jay and Terrell Menefee have in "The Groundskeeper."

The father and son team also believe the bin will make composting easier for homeowners, municipalities and professional landscapers, the three main players in the composting/landfill scenario.

Yard waste is already banned from landfills in some states, with others soon to be passing similar legislation. At Ohio landfills, for example, yard waste bans go into effect in December of 1993. California's recent AB939 legislation required each city and county to divert 25 percent of all landfill material by 1995, and 50 percent by 2000.

Landscape management professionals are therefore concerned, and want to find ways to deal with the problem in such a way that they keep their customers happy, yet are not themselves totally responsible for disposing of customer yard waste. Because no matter how much the industry explains the nutritional benefits of leaving the clipping, there's always going to be certain customers who want the clippings removed.

The Menefee's are marketing "The Groundskeeper" through their company, Delvin & Taylor of Novelty, Ohio. They now offer the bin at a volume discount to municipalities and professional landscapers across the country.

Early on, the Menefees believed their approach to composting should have low impact on the environments, be affordable, require little homeowner effort and not detract for the appearance of the customer's yard. After three years of laboratory and field testing, they believed they met, and, in some ways, exceeded their objectives.

"The Groundskeeper" is a biodegradable bin made of recycled paperboard, containing 15 percent post-consumer fiber. A water-soluble, biodegradable ink is used to dye the bin, which measures 34.5 inches across and 32 inches high.

The company says the bin has a 150-gallon capacity, and will hold about five commercial lawn refuse bags of material.

Homeowner instruction in establishing backyard composting is virtually unnecessary, considering how easy the procedure is. Grass clippings, leaves and other yard waste is layered into the bin. Occasional stirring assists in the breakdown, but is not required.

Delvin & Taylor says the composting process takes about six months.

The company is now supplying bins in bulk quantities at a cost of about \$5.50 per bin.

During their early research, beginning in 1989, the Menefees tried several approaches, using a variety of biodegradable refuse bags, tested with and without inoculators and accelerators, added to aid the composting process.

Their research revealed that the best composting bin prototypes were those made with a paperboard containing the right combination of compressive stress resistance and water vapor transmission rate characteristics.

A compressive stress resistance was found that kept the bin rigid as the materials inside were being compressed and composted, as opposed to those the two-ply paper lawn refuse bags which form multiple accordion folds and collapse along with the materials.

As a solution, a water vapor transmission rate was found that tended to keep the materials inside the bin above the 50 percent moisture level required for composting, but also allowed the bin to rapidly dry out after soaking to below the 20 percent moisture content.

According to the company, paper kept at or below 20 percent moisture content



'The Groundskeeper' compost bin is biodegradable.

decays very slowly, and as a result, the bin maintains its structural integrity over the year or two during which a homeowner would be using it.

The Menefees suggest that one bin be used in the fall to collect and store leaves, and a fresh bin be set up in spring for grass clippings. The partially composted leaves would then provide a source of carbon to layer into the grass clippings over the growing season.

An introductory package sells for \$395, and includes:

- 70 compost bins
- 70 instruction books
- 70 promotional brochures
- 5 study packages.

The composting "Pilot Program" package sells for \$765, and includes 140 bins, books and brochures, and 10 study packages.

One case of bins sells for \$195.

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