

# Composting: Turn Your Eyesore Into Black Gold

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EACH YEAR golf courses generate a tremendous amount of organic waste in the form of collected grass clippings, excess thatch from renovation projects, leaves, brush, and other woody debris. Disposal of organic waste is taxing the capacity of landfills and is illegal in some areas of the nation. Skip Wade, the golf course superintendent at Cherry Valley Country Club, and Phil Anderson, the golf course superintendent at Old Westbury Golf and Country Club, are leading the way in the New York metropolitan area with their efforts at responsible recycling of landscape debris. Aside from the satisfaction that is gained by serving their communities through their recycling efforts, both are using the compost in new and innovative ways on their golf course. Each of these men is excited about the promising results that have been achieved by using compost in their daily maintenance operations and in construction projects.

Phil Anderson has developed a composting program that utilizes organic debris generated on site, and he has initiated a cooperative program with the Village of Old Westbury whereby the Club accepts disposal of municipal yard waste. This spirit of cooperation serves the Village of Old Westbury by lessening the demand placed on them to dispose of yard waste, while providing Anderson with the ingredients needed to produce rich composted soil. Thus far, he has composted between 8,000 and 10,000 yards of debris, of which 75 percent is generated by the Village.

Depending on the intended use, the aged organic matter is blended either with old bunker sand and soil or simply with soil. The compost is used as a fairway topdressing, as a protectant applied as a late-season topdressing on putting greens, as a divot mix, in all planting beds, and as an amendment in landscaped areas. The composted soil is redistributed in formally managed wooded areas to return the organic matter swept clean during fall leaf cleanup. Compost that is blended for use in rebuilding tees using sand, compost, and soil is applied 6" to 8" deep after the sub-grade is formed. The membership at Old Westbury Country Club is very proud of Anderson's composting

operation and demonstrated this recently by purchasing an expensive new soil blender.

Skip Wade prepares compost using organic debris that is generated on site, and he also imports compost generated by the Village of Garden City, New York. He has devised a plan with the club's chef to compost much of the club's kitchen waste, which is in excess of 2,000 pounds per month. During the past year, more than 2,400 cubic yards of composted soil has been used for several projects, including the reconstruction of portions of two fairways and the construction of several bunkers and fairway mounds and moguls. It also has been used as a key ingredient in the divot mix used on tees, greens, and fairways and in the light topdressing used over newly seeded areas on the putting greens that were damaged last winter. Wade is striving to maintain his golf course using minimal amounts of pesticides, and the use of composted soil is a key component of this program. He has discovered that water requirements and the need for supplemental fertilizer and fungi-

cide applications have been greatly reduced. Wade reports that turf areas constructed on composted soil green up more quickly in the spring than turf grown on the sandy native soils. Membership support for Wade's programs is nothing short of enthusiastic.

Some may regard composting as costly and time consuming, as it does require dedicated manpower, equipment, and space. Some specialized equipment such as rototillers, soil mixing equipment, brush chippers, and tub grinders may also be required. However, thousands of dollars can be saved annually by eliminating transportation and landfill fees. An added benefit is the readily available composted soil, which often eliminates the need to import costly topsoil for golf course projects. Perhaps the greatest tangible benefit is the opportunity to serve the community by responsibly disposing of organic debris.

Indeed, investing in the equipment and manpower needed to transform organic waste into black gold makes more sense today than ever before.

*Even though the composting operation at Old Westbury Country Club is more elaborate than most, composting doesn't have to be complicated or expensive.*

