



Windy City Biosolids/Compost

Summer 2021

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Celebrating EQ Compost During International Compost Awareness Week

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) of Greater Chicago participated in International Compost Awareness Week (ICAW). This year's theme was Grow, Eat, Compost, Repeat. The MWRD partnered with the Illinois Food Scrap Coalition for its "Lunch and Learn" series held during the lunch hour from

May 3-7. MWRD Senior Environmental Soil Scientist Theresa Johnston kicked off the event with an insightful presentation about growing plants in compost and how compost improves growing conditions by improving physical, chemical, and biological soil properties. The Lunch and Learn series continued with another focus each day, followed by a Q&A session on Friday. Composters and compost enthusiasts, including industrial compost facility personnel and restauranteurs who grow their fresh ingredients in compost, participated in ICAW and shared their inspiring stories and composting advice. The program is available for viewing at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AB8ed6Y-xKE> so you can continue to learn how to Grow, Eat, Compost, Repeat!



Start a Compost Journey

Inspired by the presentations in the ICAW Lunch and Learn sessions, we challenge you to start your own compost journey. Here is a way to start using compost.

Home/apartment living

1. Start simple. Mix a couple of handfuls of compost into a small pot of soil or potting mix.
2. Plant a small herb, flower, or seeds in the pot and place near a window.
3. Water as needed.

Park district/municipality/homeowners ready for a bigger challenge

1. Create a garden bed using 2" of compost on the surface and mix into the top 4-6" of soil.
2. Plant or spread seeds of the plants of your choice.
3. Reduce normal fertilization, as the compost slowly releases nutrients over time.

Taking it further

1. Use EQ Compost as a starter for your own compost bin.
2. Try to keep a ratio of 1:2 "green waste" (such as kitchen scraps) to "brown waste" (such as dried leaves).
3. Mix and water to keep aerobic bacteria happy.

EQ Compost at Cog Hill Golf and Country Club

Cog Hill Golf and Country Club is known for its rich history and majestic courses. With 1,600 total acres, 1,000 of which are maintained, many people think only of manicured fairways and pristine putting greens. Lesser known, this world-class course has been making strides toward environmental sustainability, in part utilizing EQ Compost and EQ Biosolids. In fact, the Cog Hill superintendent, Chris Flick, saw many ways that he and his grounds crew were leaning toward sustainable practices, so he created

the position of Sustainability Specialist, a role that Angelica Carmen filled easily with her urban agriculture and environmental science background.



Angelica Carmen enjoys a visit from a monarch butterfly near the Fairway Farms.

Under Carmen's guidance, Cog Hill has undertaken some impressive projects. The Fairway Farms were created to produce food for the restaurant and on-site catering, as well as pollinator-friendly flowers to support the Fairway Farms apiary. A gravel parking lot used for overflow parking was transformed into a

bountiful garden when Carmen and her crew created raised beds with cinder blocks and filled them with EQ Compost.

"It's the best because it is so clean and consistent.

There are no weed seeds to worry about," Carmen reported of EQ Compost. Looking out over dozens of these beds filled with thriving plants, she adds, "the texture and composition of MWRD compost is beautiful."



*Photo by Angelica Carmen
Flowers grown in EQ Compost provide a habitat for the honeybees at Cog Hill Apiary.*

Carmen's goal is to create more than just a garden at a golf course. She has already made this a highlight that visitors remember, whether it is the Cog Hill honey they purchase, a classy farm-to-fork dinner, or a Fairway Farms inspired painting that they bring home. She is working toward embedding this urban farm into the fabric of the golf course and making it a part of the culture.

Recently, Carmen and Flick undertook another big project utilizing EQ Compost. An area visible from one of the four courses, next to the grounds crew facilities, was susceptible to flooding and overrun with invasive species.

The solution was a rain garden installed using a mix of approximately 50% EQ Compost and 50% sand. Invasive species were removed, and native plants were added to the rain garden to help with water uptake during heavy rain events. The rain garden has proven to be effective at reducing flooding during its first season.

Carmen and Flick are planning more sustainable efforts. They have already converted some of the roughs into pollinator habitat (*Continued on page 3.*)



A majestic view at Cog Hill, overlooking the Dubsdread course and the Des Plaines River valley in the distance.



Fairway Farms coming into bloom. Formerly a parking lot, it is now a sustainable garden at the heart of Cog Hill Golf and Country Club.



Cog Hill has already received designation as an official pollinator habitat. Angelica Carmen is working toward converting more roughs into pollinator habitat and hopes to use EQ Compost to help in the transformation.

Benjamin Krumstok Composting Partners

MWRD: What is the value of compost?

Benjamin: Compost offers value to the environment, and society, by playing three principal roles/at three levels:

- a) Composting organics, including landscape waste, farm waste, food scraps, and manures, prevents generation of Greenhouse Gasses (GHG) and the environmental damage when they are put in a landfill. (Mitigation).
- b) Compost incorporation into soil brings many benefits which improve the appearance, health, and durability of the turf and plants in those soils. Compost helps to restore natural plant and soil organism/soil biology interactions, allowing nature to support plant growth and control pests; this reduces or eliminates the need for chemical additives, improving human health as well. (Plant and Human Health).
- c) Compost incorporation into soil serves as a "carbon sink," harnessing atmospheric CO₂ and locking it into soil in a stable material. (Environmental Remediation).

MWRD: Are there limitations to creating backyard compost in some municipalities?

Benjamin: Regulations and restrictions can vary from municipality to municipality. Some have no regulations. Others may restrict backyard composting to "in-vessel" systems only (such as the revolving barrel), so you would not be able to set up an open bin system. Still other communities might ban backyard composting entirely. A resident will have to check the rules in his or her own community to ensure compliance.

MWRD: Are there limitations to using compost in some municipalities?



Benjamin Krumstok

This quarter, in honor of ICAW, we interviewed Benjamin Krumstok of Composting Partners and the Illinois Food Scrap Coalition to get some general information on compost. While not in the landscaping industry himself, Benjamin has been a leader in composting efforts in Illinois and has provided insights into composting in our region.

Benjamin: There should not be...but again, you might have to check. The material has so many benefits and different uses; we NEED to have more of the material used in more and diverse projects!

MWRD: What are the benefits of compost to our environment beyond our gardens?

Benjamin:

- a) Reduced flooding, reducing breeding grounds for insects such as mosquitoes which carry disease.
- b) Improved sports and recreational turf health, durability, and safety. Reduced need for chemical pesticides and fertilizers, so the people using these fields are not exposed to as much of the chemicals.
- c) Erosion control projects.
- d) Inherent filtering properties of compost can be used to engineer conditions which prevent contamination of waterways such as streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes.

MWRD: Why do we want to make people more aware of composting in Illinois?

Benjamin:

- a) It is an "all win" on many levels, great for the environment and great for people.
- b) Using composts manufactured by IL EPA Permitted composters supports those companies. Without them we will not have the capacity to handle the current landscape waste (currently banned from landfills), and food scraps.
- c) Composting, and increased composting extends the lifespan of existing landfills.

EQ Compost at Cog Hill Golf and Country Club, *cont.*

and received a habitat designation from the program "Monarchs in the Rough," sponsored by Audubon International and the Environmental Defense Fund. They plan to convert more areas into native prairie habitat to add to the sustainability and the beauty of the golf course. Carmen is already discussing rates of EQ Compost application for improving the native plant growth.

EQ Compost has helped provide a rich growth media for numerous sustainability projects at Cog Hill, with which Carmen and Flick could demonstrate that a renowned golf course and country club can also be a big player in sustainability.



SAVE THE DATE • TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12 • 10 a.m.–Noon

9th Annual SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT 2021

THIS LIVE **VIRTUAL** EVENT IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Public enthusiasm and support for environmental sustainability continues to grow every day. Responsive local governments, organizations and others are developing programs and processes that utilize local resources, save money and improve the environment. Attend our 9th Annual Sustainability Summit to learn about partnerships and activities of key organizations fostering a sustainable environment in the Chicago region in addition to resources available for implementing sustainable practices in your community. This year, the MWRD is hosting this live event virtually and opening it up to the general public.

Hear from community leaders about success stories on collaborative initiatives on sustainability in the Chicago area. Learn about collaborations for using compost and biosolids as a sustainable practice in the Chicago area and other cities in the U.S. The MWRD is accepting applications from Cook County individuals, organizations and businesses for its 2021 Sustainable Landscaping and Biosolids Beneficial Reuse Awards. Visit mwrld.org for details and to apply. Deadline: Sept. 15.

Join us! Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021 • 10 a.m. – Noon TO REGISTER, VISIT MWRD.ORG/SUSTAINABILITY-SUMMIT-RSVP.

EQ Compost and EQ Biosolids available now!



Spreading EQ air-dried biosolids at a Western Springs athletic field.



This is the peak season for the production of EQ compost and air-dried biosolids at the Calumet and Stickney WRPs of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago. Please send your request for these materials for using in your landscaping project.

For more information on the use of EQ biosolids or to include them in your projects, please visit our website at mwrld.org/biosolids or contact:

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