University of Minnesota Morris

composting program

A student group known as Trash Talkers helps to educate the campus about composting.

Someone's trash—our treasure!

Process

Compostable items are collected and weighed

Collection bins are located around campus and at all catering events.

All compost is transported to central location

After careful consideration we selected an area behind the baseball field for the composting site.

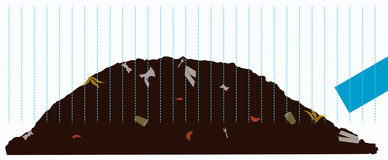
Greens and browns are mixed

Compost requires a balance of carbon-rich "browns" (leaves, napkins, paper towels) and nitrogen-rich "greens" (food waste).

- Greens are a source of protein, which allows microorganisms to grow and multiply.
- Browns are a source of carbohydrates, which supply energy and food to the microorganisms.

Windrows are formed. The windrows contain a mix of organic matter, minerals (including nitrogen), water, and microorganisms.

Windrows are long piles of biodegradable waste. Windrow composting allows large volumes to be processed.



The pile is watered and rotated regularly

Pile is sifted to remove non-biodegradable items

Completed compost is used for campus gardening

Compost Site at Morris

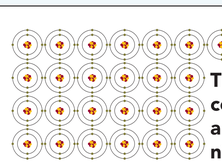
Mixing Station

Turning Station

Finished Compost

What do we compost?

- food waste
- paper towels and napkins
- to-go containers from campus dining facilities and coffee shop
- pizza boxes



The Morris compost pile has a 25:1 carbon to nitrogen ratio.

In order to function properly the compost pile also needs oxygen and moisture.

Successful Cold Weather Composting

Minnesota is a cold state! With sufficient windrow size the composting process continues during winter conditions, while we continue adding to the pile. When the process is complete the pile volume is reduced by nearly half.
We have demonstrated that an expensive industrial system housed inside of a building may not be necessary.

131°F
temperature to which the pile heats. This is necessary for killing pathogens.

We poured our own concrete tipping and mixing area to begin the process.

One of the Campus Gardens

256,425 lbs
total weight processed at our cold weather composting site as of 2015

2009
Start assessment of possibilities with Facilities Management.

2010
Students work to find on-campus site and plan for compositing.

2011
Begin collecting food waste in Dining Hall.

2012
Discuss program with community partners. Facilities Management staff goes to Composting School. By fall composting has begun.

24,393 lbs

2013
Residence halls and Turtle Mountain Cafe begin more composting. Education campaign about composting increases usage.

65,398 lbs

2014
Purchase a compost sifter with funds from the Morris Green Reinvestment Fund. Funds are paid back with reduced waste expenses.

75,848 lbs

Compost sifter removes unwanted items such as plates, forks, and plastic inadvertently thrown in bins.

2015
Add new compost collection containers around campus. Campus coffee shop switches to compostable containers. Dining Services goes to zero-waste. Install new hand towel dispensers with compostable paper towels.

90,786 lbs

2016
Expand to begin collecting pizza boxes. More paper towel containers added in residence halls and throughout campus. Focus efforts on more education and ensuring all catered events have containers to gather compost.

90,000+ lbs
(and counting)