

Compost Quality Standards

Indicator	Quality Standard for Finished Compost	
Visual	All material is dark brown (black indicates possible burning). Parent material is no longer visible. Structure is mixture of fine and medium size particle and humus crumbs.	
Physical	Moisture: 30-40%, Fine Texture (all below 1/8" mesh)	
Odor	Smells like rich humus from the forest floor; no ammonia or anaerobic odor.	
Nutrient	Carbon:Nitrogen Ratio	<17:1
	Total Organic Matter	20-35%
	Total Nitrogen	1.0-2.0%
	Nitrate Nitrogen	250-350 PPM
	Nitrite Nitrogen	0 PPM
	Sulfide	0 PPM
	Ammonium	0 or trace
	pH	6.5-8.5
	Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC)	>60 meq/100g
	Humic Acid Content	5-15%
	ERGS Reading	5,000-15,000 mS/cm
Microbiological	Heterotrophic Plate Count	1×10^8 - 1×10^{10} CFU/gdw
	Anaerobic Plate Count	Aerobes: Anaerobes at 10:1 or greater
	Yeasts and Molds	1×10^3 - 1×10^5 CFU/gdw
	Actinomycetes	1×10^6 - 1×10^8 CFU/gdw
	Pseudomonads	1×10^3 - 1×10^6 CFU/gdw
	Nitrogen-Fixing Bacteria	1×10^3 - 1×10^6 CFU/gdw
	Compost Maturity	>50% on Maturity Index at dilution rate appropriate for compost application.
	Compost Stability	<100 mg O ₂ /Kg compost dry solids-hour
	E. coli	< 3 E. coli/g
	Fecal Coliforms	<1000 MPN/g of dry solids
	Salmonella	< 3 MPN/4g total solids

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