



# RECYCLED ORGANICS

## FOR VEGETABLE GROWERS

### DEFINITION

Recycled organics are compostable organic materials, including garden organics, food waste, residual wood and timber. Recycled organics are derived from screening, shredding and processing these green wastes for up to six months to remove contaminants and create a compost high in organic matter, essential nutrients and beneficial bacteria. Recycled organics have a higher level of organic matter (60%) than conventional compost (45 – 50%), however, they often contain less nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. Suppliers or end users can add supplementary nutrients if required.

With current NSW Government policies to reduce the amount of material going into landfill, recycled organics are in plentiful supply in NSW.

Recycled organics are a good value proposition to vegetable growers because they are a safe and rapid method of increasing soil organic matter which is often lost when the soil is cultivated.

### BENEFITS OF RECYCLED ORGANICS

1. Safe to use on vegetables – no withholding period
2. Does not contain raw animal manures
3. Increased soil water infiltration and soil water holding capacity
4. Increased soil nutrient-holding capacity
5. Sustainable – material diverted from materials that would otherwise go to landfill
6. Encourage increased bacterial and fungal biomass in soils
7. Little or no odour
8. Suppression of some soil-borne diseases (e.g. Phytophthora)
9. Supplies organic matter (SOC) without the high level of phosphorus present in poultry manure



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## RISKS OF RECYCLED ORGANICS

Properly composted material adhering to the Australian Standard for Composts, soil conditioners and mulches (AS4454) is safe to use in vegetable production and will not contaminate your soil. However, inadequately prepared and screened compost could introduce weeds, foreign matter, pests or diseases – so make sure to use a reputable supplier.

There is a risk of nitrogen drawdown when using recycled organics, which occurs when woody material is being broken down in the soil. Do not reduce nitrogen fertiliser when applying recycled organics until you understand how the compost works in your production system.

## HOW TO USE RECYCLED ORGANICS COMPOST

Recycled organics are being used successfully on vegetable farms in New South Wales and Australia. Compost is an efficient method of quickly reintroducing organic matter to a vegetable cropping system.

## TYPICAL APPLICATION RATES, COST AND APPLICATION METHODS

Recycled organics cost around \$50 per cubic metre (not including delivery and spreading costs). Transport costs are a significant factor for regions in Western NSW. Typical application rates are about 5 tonnes (or 8 m<sup>3</sup>) per ha. Frequent applications (e.g. twice or more per year) are more effective in improving soil condition than less frequent, high rate applications.

A spreader with a hopper is required to spread the compost over the soil. Beds can then be formed and the compost incorporated into the soil. It is also possible to apply the compost in bands in the crop row. Strip tillage equipment is useful to incorporate the band of compost prior to planting.

## TYPICAL NUTRIENT ANALYSIS

Compost made from recycled organics will generally contain up to 75% organic matter, 1–2% nitrogen, 0.2% phosphorous and 1% potassium.



Composted recycled organics ready to spread on a vegetable farm



Compost spreading equipment

## WHERE TO PURCHASE

Recycled organics are available from a range of suppliers in New South Wales, which are listed on the Australian Organics Recycling Association website:

<https://www.aora.org.au/find-a-composter>