Businesses and multifamily complexes are now required to separate organic materials from trash and arrange for organic waste recycling services per calrecycle.ca.gov/recycle/commercial/organics.
A Closer Look at Compost

1. How do I compost food scraps?
Like yard trimmings, food scraps contain valuable nutrients that should not be discarded in the landfill. For businesses, there are many opportunities to donate pre-consumer and packaged food to local food banks and other charities. Businesses may also choose to invest in an in-vessel composting system to compost on-site if space allows. For residents, backyard composting is a great option for composting food waste. Please visit: sandiegocounty.gov/dpw/recycling/composting for information on the County’s backyard composting program.

2. What are my options for composting or recycling manure?
Composting manure, instead of stockpiling or disposing it, has many benefits for you and the environment. You can compost on-site. Composting manure eliminates pests, pathogens, and odors while decreasing runoff and producing an inexpensive soil amendment. Be mindful of the process and location of your pile to ensure pathogens and contaminants don’t leach into local waters. Solana Center offers workshops to teach manure composting. The County also offers a free video on how to compost manure on-site. The video is located online under our Composting page: https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/dpw/DPW_VIDEO_ARCHIVE/horsemanure.mp4

“San Diego County sends 140,000 tons of yard trimmings to the landfill each year”
- County of San Diego
Using Compost and Mulch

Compost and mulch are excellent for improving your soil’s nutrient content and water retention. Applied to your landscape, they will boost the health of your plants at a low cost with no adverse impact on the environment.

Compost improves the structure and organic content of your soil. It saves money by reducing the amount of watering and fertilizer needed to create healthy plants.

Add 1-2” of finished compost to your garden and till it 6 – 8” into the soil.

Mulching reduces waste, prevents weed growth, and reduces soil erosion. Mulch fosters a strong microbial community in the soil, which is essential for plant growth.

Adding an inch of mulch two times a year to a garden can help retain moisture, build soil fertility, and protect plants.

In addition to your local nursery, many of the facilities that accept yard trimmings also sell these products. These locations can be found in the attached Facility and Pricing Insert.

Introduction

The intention of this guide is to inform County of San Diego residents and businesses about proper disposal of yard trimmings, also known as green waste, grass clippings, landscape debris, or plant waste. By following the guidelines provided here, yard trimmings can be easily recycled, composted or mulched. This not only keeps yard trimmings from ending up in our local landfills, but also helps retain beneficial nutrients and moisture in our soils.

This guide offers do-it-yourself solutions for reducing and recycling yard trimmings.

• Learn how to compost on-site.
• Learn where to dispose so that it is easier on your wallet and the environment.
• Learn about curbside pickup options.
California's goal is to reach 75% diversion through recycling, composting, and source reduction of solid waste by 2020. Disposing organic material in the landfill releases large amounts of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, due to anaerobic decomposition. Recycling or composting yard trimmings reduces greenhouse gas emissions and conserves landfill space.

Yard trimmings, like other organic materials, contain nutrients that can be redistributed into your soil and your plants. Similar to aluminum and other recyclables, yard trimmings should be disposed of properly so that the valuable resources contained in them are not lost.

**Benefits of Proper Disposal of Yard Trimmings**

- Conserve valuable nutrients, which can become soil amendments for another growing cycle.
- Reduce greenhouse gases released into the environment.
- Preserve landfill space for items that truly can’t be recycled, reused or re-purposed. Help San Diego County achieve state-mandated waste reduction goals.
- Save money. Green material disposal fees are on average 30% lower than landfill fees. See Facility and Pricing Insert for yard trimming recycling options.

**Keep Them Out of the Landfill**

Some waste and recycling haulers offer curbside pickup of yard trimmings. To have your yard trimmings collected separately, contact your service provider.

If you have curbside green pickup, please use your bins properly. Residents should place clearly marked collection containers out on their collection day. Residents and businesses may also make arrangements with their commercial gardeners or landscape companies to remove and properly dispose of yard trimmings. Waste haulers may also provide special dumpsters to be permanently located at business sites for yard trimmings. Please contact your service provider for curbside pickup options. A list of unincorporated County haulers and recyclers can be found at: tinyurl.com/SDWasteHaulers and tinyurl.com/SDRecyclers
3 Ways to Manage Yard Trimmings

1. Compost It Yourself On-Site
Yard trimmings can be composted on-site at your home, at a business, or community garden. On-site composting diverts waste from the landfill, creates a beneficial soil amendment for your yard, and saves money due to eliminating the need for hauling and facility disposal costs. Compost benefits the soil through improved water retention capability, nutrient content, microbial quality, and soil structure. This creates the perfect environment for healthy plants, reducing the need for synthetic fertilizers or pesticides. The County, in partnership with Solana Center, offers a backyard composting education program with free workshops, Master Composter training courses, compost demonstration sites, a “rotline,” and online and print resources. Composting can be tailored to the space and time you have available. See www.solanacenter.org for more information on how to get started! A complete Compost It Yourself Guide is available online: solanacenter.org/resources/compost-it-yourself

2. Drop-Off
Residents and businesses may also drop-off yard trimmings to facilities that will compost yard trimmings into a beneficial soil amendment or chip materials into mulch. These facilities are often much less expensive than taking the materials to a landfill. Finished compost and mulch may also be purchased at some of the same locations, saving a trip, if it is needed for your home or business landscapes. These locations can be found in the attached Facility and Pricing Insert.
San Diego’s Landfill Composition

Countywide, San Diego disposes of over one million tons of organic waste each year in the landfill. Approximately 20% of those materials are yard trimmings and wood waste. The unincorporated area of San Diego County disposes of nearly 140,000 tons annually. These materials can be put to higher and better uses such as composting and mulching.

In the landfill, alongside inorganic waste, organic material decomposes without oxygen, or anaerobically. Consequently, methane and other harmful greenhouse gases are released. By contrast, proper disposal, such as with composting and mulching, breaks down the material aerobically and recycles the nutrients for use in another growing cycle.

Tips for Reducing Yard Trimmings

Proper Pruning: Save time, money, and labor by reducing the amount of yard trimmings produced from your yard. Research your plants to learn how much pruning is required. Your local nursery can help.

Smart Plant Selection: Consider your local climate and the space available in your yard when choosing plants.

Avoid Overwatering: Giving your plants too much water may promote excess growth. Check your soil regularly either with a moisture probe, or by hand, digging 6-8” deep. Research how much water your plants actually need. Plants native to San Diego are very drought-tolerant -- they actually thrive with less water!

Grasscycle Your Lawn: Rather than collecting the clippings from lawn mowing, leave them on the surface of your lawn to increase nutrients and water retention. Cut your grass no more than ⅓ of its length.

ADDITIONAL: Some yard trimmings can be more difficult to handle such as palm fronds, succulents, and ice plants. Some facilities will not accept these materials; animal manures are also often not accepted. Contact the facilities listed in the attached Facilities and Pricing Insert for particulars.

Yard trimmings consist of grass clippings, leaves, garden material, clippings, and branches.

Dirt, rocks, concrete, lumber, and construction waste are not considered yard trimmings, but can be handled by other facilities. The County offers information for recycling these materials online in our County Construction and Recycling guide: tinyurl.com/CDRecycling

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