



Managing organic waste streams  
present unique challenges.

A wide-angle photograph of a large-scale composting facility. In the foreground, there are several large, dark brown mounds of compost material. A yellow tractor is visible on the right side, working on one of the mounds. In the background, there is a body of water, a line of trees, and a small white building. The sky is clear and blue.

Large-scale composting

A photograph of a red-painted wooden compost bin. The bin is filled with a mixture of dark brown soil and various vegetable scraps, including green leaves, yellowing leaves, and some root vegetables. A shovel with a grey handle is leaning against the left side of the bin. The bin is situated outdoors on a gravel surface, with green plants visible in the background and foreground.

# Small-scale composting



# Dishing the Dirt:

25 composting systems tested over 1 year

## **The premise:**

There are many different methods of small-scale composting. Different systems may be a better fit for different households or circumstances. Some are more or less effective for municipal composting programs.

## The factors:

- What inputs you have, in what amounts
- Available outdoor or indoor space
- Available time for managing the system
- Level of expertise and/or willingness to learn
- Start-up expense
- On-going expenses
- The “ick” factor
- Aesthetic taste

# Our compost systems: Outdoors

## **Static (non-moving) bins:**

- Garden gourmet
- Soilsaver
- Earth Machine
- Co-op bin
- Earthmaker
- Aerobin
- Green Johanna
- Wire bin
- Blue barrel
- Metal bracket wooden slat bin
- Stackable wooden bin
- 2-bin wooden system
- 3-bin pallet composter

## **Tumbling bins:**

- Dual-compartment tumbler
- Sunmar continuous composter
- End-over-end barrel
- Ecomposter ball

## **In the dirt:**

- Trench composting
- Sheet composting
- Lasagna composting
- Green cone

# Our compost systems: Indoors

## **Electric:**

- Naturemill composter

## **Vermicompost:**

- Simple tub
- Worm factory

## **Bokashi fermentation:**

- Bokashi bucket

## **Regular composting:**

- Compost tub

# What worked well: Static bins

## Static (non-moving) bins:

- Garden gourmet
- Soilsaver
- Earth Machine
- Co-op bin
- Aerobin
- Green Johanna
- Metal bracket wooden slat bin
- Stackable wooden bin
- 2-bin wooden system
- 3-bin pallet composter



# What didn't work well: Static bins

## Static (non-moving) bins:

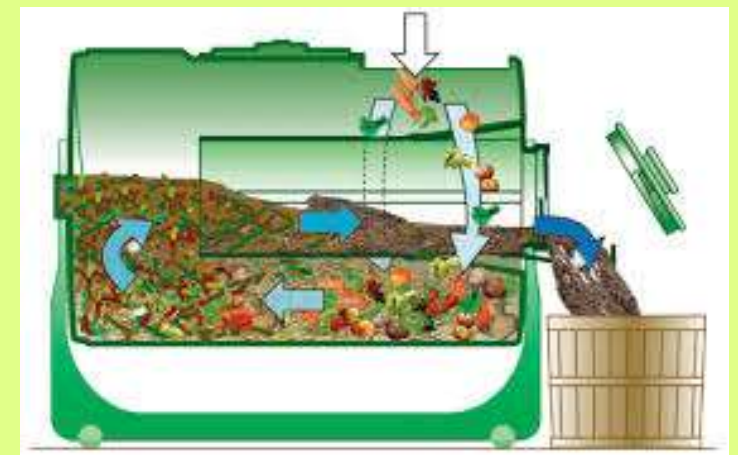
- Earthmaker
- Wire bin



# A mixed bag: Tumbling bins

## Tumbling bins:

- Dual-compartment tumbler
- End-over-end barrel
- Ecomposter ball
- Sunmar continuous composter



# What worked well: In the dirt

## In the dirt:

- Trench composting
- Sheet composting
- Lasagna composting



# What didn't work well: In the dirt

In the dirt:  
-Green cone



# It's all good: Indoors

## Vermicompost:

- Simple tub
- Worm factory



# It's all good: Indoors

**Bokashi fermentation:**  
-Bokashi bucket



# It's all good: Indoors

**Electric:**  
-Naturemill composter



# It's all good: Indoors

**Regular  
composting:**  
-Compost tub



# Summary

## Best systems:

- Garden Gourmet
- Soilsaver
- Aerobin
- Green Johanna
- Wooden slat bin
- 2-bin wood system
- 3-bin pallet bin
- Trench composting
- Sheet composting
- Lasagna composting
- Vermicompost tub
- Worm factory
- Bokashi bucket

## Decent systems:

- Earth Machine
- Co-op bin
- Blue barrels
- Stacking wooden bin
- Dual-compartment tumbler
- Sunmar continuous composter
- End-over-end barrel
- Naturemill composter
- Indoor compost tub

## Inefficient systems:

- Earthmaker
- Wire bin
- Green cone
- Ecomposter ball

# Conclusions

- Small-scale composting is an efficient way for municipalities to cut down on organic waste going to the landfill.
- Static bins should be sturdy and simple.
- Tumbling bins generally work but are much more expensive.
- You do not have to buy any bin; there are compost methods done directly on the dirt which are very effective.
- Apartments, schools, offices, and other indoor spaces should not be ignored; there are indoor composting methods that work as well.
- It is important for municipalities to have information and/or composting support available to encourage small-scale composters.