



Compost Blankets

Town of Hillsborough Information Sheet

A compost blanket is a type of stormwater management practice that — when properly installed — eliminates erosion, increases stormwater infiltration into subsurface soil, and promotes plant growth. The Town of Hillsborough has successfully used compost blankets along the Riverwalk greenway and at Cates Creek, Gold, and Kings Highway parks to control erosion on steep slopes and provide natural “no mow” habitat, especially for pollinators.

A compost blanket is essentially a layer of commercial compost spread across disturbed or bare soils. This “blanket” of compost fills erosion rills and provides an excellent microclimate for seed germination and plant growth.

Compost blankets include many benefits. They:

- **Prevent soil erosion** by binding the soil and reducing the impact energy of rainfall.
- **Assist in stormwater management** by increasing infiltration and slowing the surface flow of stormwater runoff.
- **Improve downstream water quality** by reducing or removing pollutants such as heavy metals, grease, oil, fuels, nitrogen and phosphorous from stormwater runoff.
- **Promote healthier plant growth** by providing available nutrients and reducing plant disease.
- **Improve soil health** by adding nutrients and soil biota, which improves the biological, chemical and structural health of soils.
- **Conserve water** by absorbing rainfall, which reduces the need for supplemental watering and provides more moisture during drought.

Additionally, using compost reduces waste and combats climate

Continued on next page.



Compost being blown in place for the Cates Creek Park compost blankets.



Compost blankets improve aesthetics and provide pollinator habitat.

What is Compost?

Compost results from the controlled biological decomposition of organic material. The organic material is sanitized through the generation of heat and stabilized to the point that it is beneficial to plant growth. Compost is an organic matter resource that is able to improve the biological, chemical and physical characteristics of soils or growing media. Compost contains plant nutrients but is typically not characterized as fertilizer.

Source: U.S. Composting Council, www.compostingcouncil.org

Continued from front page.

impact. Composting diverts waste such as food scraps and other organic byproducts from the landfill. Compost also reduces greenhouse gases and helps ecosystems become resilient to rising temperatures!

Compost blankets are even more effective than topsoil and mulch. University studies show that compost blankets reduce the amount of stormwater runoff over areas treated with topsoil. Mulch is less effective for erosion control and revegetation because it provides 70 to 75 percent soil coverage while compost provides nearly 100 percent.

The town uses commercially produced compost for its compost blankets. Commercially produced compost uses controlled aerobic, biological decomposition. The process includes medium and high temperature treatment, which significantly reduces the viability of pathogens and weed seeds in accordance with Environmental Protection Agency standards.

Installing compost blankets is relatively simple and cost effective. Large-scale compost blankets are best installed by commercial contractors that use a large truck and blower system to blow in the compost. These systems use electronics to vary the rate and depth, and some even use a seed hopper to automatically mix in the appropriate amount of seed. Small areas can be installed by hand using rakes, shovels and wheel barrows, making compost blankets a great choice for homeowners too.

Installation of a compost blanket is as easy as 1-2-3:

1. Install a compost filter sock or equivalent at the base of a slope.
2. Rake or lightly till the area and apply about 2 inches of commercial compost evenly across the area.
3. Hand sow native seed mix and lightly rake into the compost.

For more information or if you would like to consult about compost blankets on your property, please contact us below.



This is one of the Cates Creek Park compost blankets before installation (top), just after installation (middle) and one year after installation (bottom).

Stormwater and Environmental Services Division

101 E. Orange St.
PO Box 429, Hillsborough, NC 27278

919-296-9621 | terry.hackett@hillsboroughnc.gov

