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# COMPOSTING CHRONICLE

*News from the Georgia Composting Association*

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Georgia  
Composting  
Association  
P.O. Box 2454  
Peachtree City, GA  
30268

## Composting in the Southeast

### Recycle Organics '02

By Julia Gaskin  
University of Georgia

The biennial meeting, Composting in the Southeast, was hosted by the University of Florida during October. The Georgia Composting Association was well represented. The conference was attended by composters, local government officials, researchers, consultants, regulators, and equipment manufacturers. Because the conference was small, it provided an excellent opportunity for networking and exchanging ideas.

The conference began with a presentation by Dr. Rufus Chaney discussing land reclamation using composts. He emphasized that composts can be tailor-made to remediate lands with high metals in the soils that prevent vegetative growth. For example, low grade industrial by-products high in iron and magnesium can be added to compost to limit phosphorus and metal availability. Many of our soils in Georgia have high levels of phosphorus due to the repeated application of manures. The talk stimulated several interesting discussions and opened up

new ideas for potential markets.

Several talks over the three days discussed marketing. A common thread was the need for quality standards and consistent products. Dr. M. Rahmani from the University of Florida reported the results of an extensive survey in that state. The survey indicated that although composters said they were producing quality products, the users

reported the major barrier to compost use was poor quality and inconsistent products. As an impediment to compost use, this topped even price and transportation concerns. This interesting disparity is something our membership may want to address as we work to develop new markets.

The meeting closed with a tour of the new FORCE (Florida Organics Recycling

Center for Excellence) Center. This center has a commercial composting operation on site and hopes to catalyze organic recycling in Florida by providing a place to conduct demonstrations and educational projects.

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*"Because the conference was small, it provided an excellent opportunity for networking and exchanging ideas."*

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### Welcome New Members

**George Boyhan**, University of Georgia Extension  
Horticulturist, Statesboro, GA

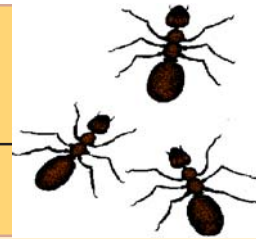
**William Martello**, Vice-President, Jordan, Jones  
and Goulding, Athens, GA

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# Compost Challenges

## Letter from the President

By Maxcy P. Nolan, Jr., Ph.D., President



### Upcoming Articles

#### Waiting on You...

The articles in the next edition of *Composting Chronicle* will be those submitted by our readers.

Please submit articles by January 15, 2003.

### Articles for the Composting Chronicle?

Please submit any materials for the *Composting Chronicle* to Julia Gaskin at: [jgaskin@engr.uga.edu](mailto:jgaskin@engr.uga.edu). Please feel free to call with any ideas for upcoming issues.

I think you will agree with me that a lot has taken place since the May 2002 edition of *Composting Chronicle*. One of the most significant being the severe drought Georgia, as well as many other states, has experienced over the last four or five years and especially this year.

Water use restrictions have placed a severe financial strain on many of Georgia's industries (especially the greenhouse and nursery industries) and its residents. It has come down to no outdoor watering in some counties. In fact, water use restrictions had neighbors spying on neighbors just in case someone was watering outdoors during the restricted times. Citations were handed out to some residents.

This all got me to thinking about the triangle of highly critical environmental issues that we are facing - SOIL - WATER - AIR - and how composted materials help conserve and preserve soil, water and air. Compost can help keep soil in place so it doesn't fill the air as dust. Compost can help keep water from carrying soil away as erosion to contaminate streams, rivers, and lakes. So, if you see any water running off of any surface, especially if it is carrying any soil particles, we should be trying to get a composted product used to keep the soil in place, water from running off and vegetation growing more efficiently, which results in

more carbon dioxide being converted into oxygen and cleaner air.

GCA members are constantly being called on to provide valuable and unique expertise and products for meetings and demonstrations. And we respond. The value of these "freebies" hasn't been compiled but it has to be in the tens of thousands of dollars annually. The expertise is available in GCA to take virtually any type and quantity of organic matter and compost it into a product that will comply with virtually any specification.

Slowly but surely we seem to be making progress in getting compost used but we still have a long way to go. Landfills are filling up with materials that could be composted and used to conserve our vital resources. The Department of Transportation still does not use compost to reduce the erosion caused by their projects. I am convinced that GCA needs to work harder on these two specific issues so we can get these two trains headed in the right direction.

A lot is being done but we need more committed individuals to jump in here to help us solve these problems. So, join GCA and together we can make a bigger contribution to preserving the quality of our SOIL, WATER & AIR. LET'S ROLL! ■

## Congratulations, Wayne King



At the GCA Board Meeting October 6, 2002, Mr. Wayne King, was presented with the Past President's Gavel for his work during the Association's inception and as President for the first three years. Mr. King is president of Erth Products, a manufacturer of compost from biosolids and peanut hulls with a production facility located outside of Plains, GA.

Submitted by Dave Bloyer ■

# When Is It Compost? When Is It Mulch?

By Julia Gaskin  
University of Georgia

Recently, Jason Governo and Britt Faucette from the Engineering Outreach Service at the University of Georgia conducted a survey of the composting infrastructure in Georgia. They began their work by reviewing the municipalities that reported they were composting yard trimmings to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. In the 1999-2000 report, 70% of the counties and 66% of the cities reported composting yard trimmings. Wow, Georgia was doing better than we thought. Unfortunately, telephone interviews and site visits indicated that only 38 out of the 130 facilities that thought they were composting were composting. Most of the facilities were actually mulching their yard trimmings.

So what's the difference? Composting is the process of decomposing organic materials to form stabilized organic matter. In the *Field Guide to Compost Use*, it is defined as a controlled, microbially-mediated process that is heat dependent. The main keys are "controlled" and "heat dependent." Most of the

local governments interviewed had ground yard trimmings, and these sometimes sat in piles from some period of time. But, there was no effort to control the moisture, oxygen, or carbon:nitrogen ratio to produce a compost recipe or a specific stabilized product. These results point out that an opportunity exists both for education and producing compost and compost products. ■

## Upcoming Events

**May 2, 2003**  
**The Decomposition Mission, UGA Bioconversion Center**

A field day for elementary school children to learn about composting and organic recycling. Volunteers are welcome!

More information: Julia Gaskin 706 542-1401

## News

The Athens-Clarke County Public Utilities' Classic City Compost is proud to announce that it has joined the Seal of Testing Assurance Program administered by the United States Composting Council. It is the second facility in Georgia to do so.

*Submitted by Dave Bloyer*



## GEORGIA COMPOSTING ASSOCIATION TO PARTICIPATE IN GEORGIA ORGANICS CONFERENCE AND GROWER/RESEARCHER ROUNDTABLE By George Boyhan

Georgia Organics (GO) is planning on having their annual conference in Statesboro, Georgia this year on the Georgia Southern University campus at the Nessmith-Lane Continuing Education Building. This event will be held Saturday and Sunday, **February 22-23, 2003**. The GO annual conference will be preceded by a Grower/Researcher Roundtable on February 21-22, 2003. This Roundtable will address researchable areas in organic production. Participants are expected from 10 southeastern states.

Georgia Composting Association will be a sponsor of these events with the hope of encouraging new members as well as networking with organic growers and supporters. They will have a booth at the conference as well as speakers on the program. This is a great opportunity for current members to meet with potential customers.

For more information about the conference or Roundtable and information on registration contact:

Mary Anne Woodie  
Georgia Organics  
298 W. Junction Ct NW  
Kennesaw, GA 30144-2110  
(770) 928-3854  
[mawoodie@mindspring.com](mailto:mawoodie@mindspring.com)

George Boyhan  
East Georgia Extension Center  
PO Box 8112, GSU  
Statesboro, GA 30460  
(912) 681-5639  
[gboyhan@uga.edu](mailto:gboyhan@uga.edu)

## A Closer Look at Our Members

### Dr. Darbie Granberry

Dr. Granberry has been an Extension Horticulturist at the University of Georgia since 1976. During that time, he has worked in the area of commercial vegetable production and emphasized adoption of "best-management" cultural practices to enhance quality, yield and profitability. Currently he is interested in composting and the utilization of compost in vegetable production. He conducts applied studies and demonstrations with compost focused on (1) improving the physical and nutritional properties of field soils, (2) improving transplant growing media, (3) improving water use/efficiency in the field and (4) determining the effects of compost on the incidence of soilborne diseases of vegetable crops. He also helped develop and distribute a slide set promoting the use of properly composted manures in producing a "safe" food supply.

He currently serves as Associate Editor of HortTechnology, the primary outreach publication of the American Society for Horticultural

Science and is an Educational Advisor to the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association.

Darbie is located at the Horticulture Unit on the Tifton Campus. He and his wife Hayward have two sons and a granddaughter. His hobbies are gardening and fishing. ■



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