

## Food Waste Composting Highlighted at Ag Progress Days

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — A pilot project that has diverted hundreds of tons of food waste away from landfills and converted it — along with leaves, manure and other organic wastes — into a useable product will be showcased at Penn State's Ag Progress Days, Aug. 18-20.

Project Earth Grow is a university-wide effort to compost food waste from several university dining halls, along with leaves and woody materials collected on the University Park campus and manure produced in the College of Agricultural Sciences' farm operations. The effort is spearheaded by Penn State's Office of Physical Plant, Housing and Food Services and the College of Agricultural Sciences.

"In the 1998-1999 academic year, we expect to compost 300 tons of food waste and 400 tons of leaves, plus a smaller amount of woody material," says Glen Cauffman, project co-chair and manager of farm operations in the College of Agricultural Sciences. "In addition to dining halls, we expect the Nittany Lion Inn and the Penn Stater

Conference Center Hotel to join the effort in the near future. The compost produced by the project is used to improve tilth and fertility of plantings and landscaped areas around campus."

Visitors to Ag Progress Days will see evidence of the composting program at various locations around the grounds. Samples of the composted waste will be on display at the composting demonstration area and at the Conservation Education Area. Those taking the twice-daily Manure/Compost Pad tour will see compost-turning equipment in action.

Most of the landscaped areas and planters throughout the site will be mulched with Project Earth Grow compost. Signs displaying the project's logo will identify these areas for visitors.

In addition, invited guests at two Ag Progress Days luncheons will be asked to participate in the program. As many as 1,000 attendees at the Alumni Day luncheon on Aug. 18 and the Government/Industry Day luncheon on Aug. 19 will consume food and beverages from paper plates and cups. Except for plastic utensils, all waste from the

luncheons — including the paper tablecloths — will be collected in special containers for composting. Luncheon guests will receive "APD Official Composter" buttons.

"Our long-term goal is to develop a center for research and education related to the recycling of organic wastes," Cauffman says. "The idea is to use science and education to create a holistic system that goes full circle, from waste to utilization."

Penn State's Ag Progress Days features more than 500 acres of educational and commercial exhibits, tours and machinery demonstrations. It is held at the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center at Rock Springs, nine miles southwest of State College on Route 45. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday, with extended hours of 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Wednesday. Admission and parking are free.

For more information, call (800) PSU-1010 toll-free through August 20 or visit the Ag Progress Days site on the World Wide Web at <http://apd.cas.psu.edu>.



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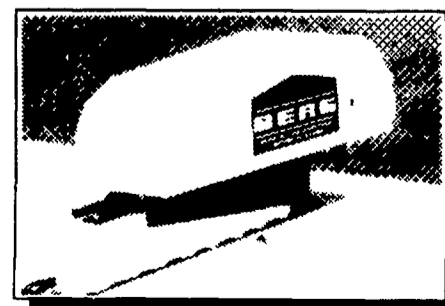
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