

## 3.1.2 Common Operations: Groundskeeping/Landscaping

### Tip Sheet #1

**WASTE ORIGIN:** Grounds Maintenance

**WASTE TYPES:** Grass Clippings, Leaves, Tree Branches, and Brush

**WASTE REDUCTION METHODS:**

- ! **On-site composting and “grasscycling”** can reduce solid waste volumes and disposal costs by:
  - ! **Leaving grass clippings lie**, significantly reducing waste volume, while conserving soil nutrients and saving fertilizer costs.
    - ! A **mulching mower** can cut the grass into smaller pieces, thereby decomposing faster; regular mowers can be retrofit with mulching blades.
  - ! **Composting** leaves and branches along with grass trimmings and other organic matter, creating soil additive or mulch.
    - ! High quality **compost could be sold** (as mulch, potting soil, landfill cover, or soil amendment) to cover groundskeeping costs.
    - ! **Chipping** other ground debris, like branches, providing mulch to reduce weeds and conserve moisture around interior plants or around landscaped trees, shrubs, and bushes.
- ! Numerous options for **off-site composting** of yard waste can reduce their on-site management and disposal costs:
  - ! Municipalities often serve as **clearinghouses** for excess grass clippings or leaves; this type of exchange could be started more informally between businesses or with community centers.
  - ! **Community-sponsored programs** may allow businesses to place leaves at curbside for pickup.
  - ! **Hauler-sponsored programs** often pay for bagged leaves for commercial composting or landspreading.
  - ! **Drop-off programs** are often sponsored by communities, haulers, nurseries, farmers, or others interested in managing yard waste.
- ! Choose a **low maintenance landscape design**: slow-growing species and evergreens generally create little debris.
- ! State **solid waste laws** often require responsible government agencies to provide information on local yard waste management options; contact the local, county, or state recycling coordinator.
- ! **Other information sources** include local county extension agents, area refuse haulers, or the Yellow Pages, where commercial yard waste processors may be listed.
- ! **Never burn yard waste.** Open leaf burning **produces particulate air pollutants and chemicals** such as phenols and hydrocarbons. These contain toxic, irritant, cancer-causing compounds, and carbon monoxide.

- ! **Wildfires** are usually caused by unregulated yard waste burning. Wildfires cause extensive property loss, are expensive to control and extinguish, and endanger the health and safety of people and animals.

**Sources:**

*Backyard Composting: Your Complete Guide to Recycling Yard Clippings*, Harmonious Press; Ojai, CA, 1992.

*Business Guide for Reducing Solid Waste*, U.S. EPA, Solid Waste and Emergency Response, November 1993, EPA/530-K-92-004.

*Composting to Reduce the Waste Stream: A Guide to Small Scale Food and Yard Waste Composting*, Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service, Cooperative Extension, 1991, Ithaca.

*Home Composting Handbook*; Dane County Public Works, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources; 1992.

*Options for Managing Leaves*, Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center, University of Wisconsin-Extension.

*Waste Prevention Pays Off: Companies Cut Waste in the Workplace*, U.S. EPA, Solid Waste and Emergency Response, November 1993, EPA/530-K-92-005.