



# Celebrate Earth Day at Sonoma Compost

In 1970, the first Earth Day was held with the goal of promoting awareness and appreciation of our shared environment.

To honor the 40th anniversary of that important milestone, we invite you and your family to attend our Earth Day Open House on **Thurs. April 22nd**, from 7am until 3pm. Come join us to:



- **Listen to live music.** An eclectic mix will be provided from noon to 3pm by SCC's own Esau Robles.

- **Tour our operations.** Many of you love our products; now here's your chance to peek "behind the scenes" and learn how we do what we do.

We'll also describe how Mother Earth's fantastic tools help us turn yard trimmings and other organic (i.e., carbon-based) discards into garden gold. Plus we'll give you information about composting at home.

- **Ask your composting questions,** to start your own compost pile or resolve problems.
- **Pet the goats,** a treat for "children of all ages."

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## Landfill Update & Thank You

As a follow-up to our last newsletter, we're glad to report that the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors has decided not to sell the central landfill (where we're located), which removes that uncertainty from our future planning.

We're pleased that all the Supervisors expressed their support of Sonoma Compost Company (SCC) during the decision-making process, and their desire to maintain our operations. We want to especially

acknowledge Supervisors Shirlee Zane and Efren Carrillo for their leadership both on this issue and in supporting our program. We're also grateful to the members of the community who voiced their appreciation of SCC's work.

The County and local cities are now working on a long-term solution for Sonoma County's solid waste, including ultimately achieving the goal of zero waste. SCC remains committed to helping create that new reality.

We also want to warmly thank everyone who answered our recent survey. We were moved by how many of you responded, and glad to hear your thoughts about our services, which were overwhelmingly positive. Thank you as always for your support of our efforts for a better world.

### EARTH WEEK SALE - 25% OFF

*From April 19 through 24, 2010*

#### Sonoma Compost (Organic)

Now only \$12/yd<sup>3</sup>

*Dark, rich compost from recycled yard trimmings and vegetable food scraps.*

#### Organic Hi-Test Compost (Organic)

Now only \$14.25/yd<sup>3</sup>

*The quality of Sonoma Compost with higher nitrogen content from chicken feathers.*

- Organic? ✓ Yes
- Lab Tested? ✓ Yes
- Delivery? ✓ Yes
- Free Soil Advice? ✓ Yes
- Recycled? ✓ Yes



We'll donate 25% of the sale of these items to Daily Acts, California FarmLink, & Bayer Farm

**Affordable  
Local  
Effective**

*Want to hear about future sales? Please send a request to [salesalert@sonomacompost.com](mailto:salesalert@sonomacompost.com).*

*For more about all of our products, see page 3 and our website [www.sonomacompost.com](http://www.sonomacompost.com).*

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## Converting Your Lawn

Locally and beyond, folks are increasingly looking for ways to conserve water, reduce energy use, and save time in maintaining their landscapes.

One easy way to accomplish all three goals is to replace some or all of your lawn with flowers, vegetables, or native plants.

However, the idea of digging up your lawn can be daunting. In addition to being labor-intensive, it removes valuable topsoil from your



Lawn Conversion, Before & After

property and presents a disposal problem (because sod is not allowed in the green can).

There is a great alternative — lawn conversion — which leaves the grass in place and creates a planting surface on top of it.

To convert your lawn to other uses, just place sheets of cardboard or newspaper on top of the grass. Cover this with 2 inches of compost

then 3 to 5 inches of mulch. (The mulch helps conserve water and prevent weeds.) Water this thoroughly, keep it moist, and nature will do the rest. After one or two months, microbes will have magically decomposed the lawn and a beautiful fertile soil will be ready for your new planting.

So what are the best SCC products to use for this conversion process?

If you're installing a native plant garden, we'd recommend our **Sonoma Compost**, plus either our **Vineyard** or **Path Mulch**.

Or, if you're planting a vegetable garden, we'd suggest a high-nitrogen compost, such as our **Organic Hi-Test Compost** for well-drained soils, or our **Mallard Plus** for clay soils. Then follow with **Vineyard Mulch**. We also advise food gardeners to use paper as a weed barrier, to avoid the glue found in cardboard.

## The 350 Garden Challenge

The goal is certainly ambitious: to, in one weekend, create 350 bountiful waterwise gardens at Sonoma County sites ranging from front yards to apartment patios, city landscapes to schools, churches to businesses. Each one will be designed to grow food and habitat, conserve water and reduce greenhouse emissions, and promote greywater and low-impact development. They'll also demonstrate how

gardens help increase local healthy food supplies, beautify neighborhoods, and build community.

The project (a collaborative effort of iGROW Sonoma, GoLocal, and Daily Acts) is one of many events occurring internationally the same weekend (May 15 & 16) to demonstrate support for 350.org's vision of uniting the world for climate solutions. You might remember last year's 350 actions, which engaged millions of people in diverse locations around the globe.

SCC is excited to be a major sponsor of this local gardening

event, and we invite you to participate too. You can sign up to create a garden of your own (beginners welcome), volunteer to garden, help coordinate projects, donate money or materials, or be a business sponsor. Project organizers will assist folks with garden planning and design, access to materials, team building, and documentation.

For more information, see [www.igrowsonoma.org](http://www.igrowsonoma.org) or contact iGROW at 565-6681.

garden  
**350** challenge   
MAY 15-16, 2010

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# Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

## How much compost do I need?

Here's a handy method for estimating how much compost (or mulch) you'll need for your project, whether you're starting a garden or filling raised beds.

- 1) Get the square footage of the work area (length times width). If the area is an odd shape, roughly "square" it up in your mind.
- 2) Multiply this by the desired material depth in inches.

For backyard gardens, we recommend up to 2 inches of compost. Soil that's already rich in organic matter will need less; poor soil will need more.

- 3) Divide this number by 324 and you'll have your needed amount in cubic yards. Or go to this website, which does the math for you and gives you additional information. [www.savingwater.org/outside\\_compostcalc.htm](http://www.savingwater.org/outside_compostcalc.htm)

## SCC's Key Products

SCC offers soil amendments to meet a wide variety of needs, including:

- **Sonoma Compost.** Blend this into the dirt around structural plants, such as shrubs and trees, to improve soil and add nutrients.
- **Organic Hi-Test Compost.** Combine into garden soil for structure and higher-nitrogen nourishment. Also use for sandy and loamy soils.
- **Mallard Plus.** Mix with heavy clay soils to lighten and add nitrogen.
- **Feather-Lite Soil.** Raise soil levels or fill raised beds with this blend of sandy loam and our *Mallard Plus*.
- **Screened Vineyard Mulch.** Spread this on top of soil to control weeds, reduce erosion, and conserve water.

## Why are your compost and mulch OK for organic farms?

Because we follow the compost standards of the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI). For instance, we monitor to ensure that requirements are met for temperature, pathogen suppression, metal limits, etc. We also don't accept synthetic materials, such as compostable plastics. While incidental pesticides might come in with plant materials, they break down in our composting process. We confirm this with periodic testing to ensure that you receive a healthy and beautiful product.

## How do I compost food scraps?

Food scraps are now the largest component of the organic (i.e., carbon-based) materials going into our landfill. However, we can all give food scraps a better future by putting them into our compost pile or green can instead. You'll be amazed at how much less garbage you produce!

You can compost many materials, including vegetable trimmings, tea bags, coffee grounds, fruit scraps, egg shells, bread, and pasta. Meat and dairy shouldn't go in a home compost pile or the green can (unless you're in our pilot program).

To make it easier for you to gather your scraps and carry them outside, Sonoma Compost is now offering attractive kitchen pails at cost (see above right, \$5 plus tax). Or you can use any container you have on hand.

To avoid odors and fruit flies, empty the pail out frequently. You

can also line your pail with a paper bag or newspaper to absorb moisture. However, don't use plastic bags (even compostable ones) as they're not accepted in our program, in order to keep our compost usable on organic farms.



## Do you deliver?

Yes we do! For just the actual trucking cost (no markup), you can get our quality products delivered to your location. Or visit our retail site at the landfill where we can load your pickup truck or you can fill your own bags or cans. We also have bags available.

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- **Visit our worm bin** and watch these wonderful creatures at work.
- **Take home a free 4" organic heirloom tomato plant**, as long as supplies last.
- **Buy compost** to nourish your garden or landscape project.

You can even get a discount! From April 19 to 24, get 25% off our Sonoma and Organic Hi-Test Composts when picked up at our retail site.

We'll also donate 25% of these sales to Daily Acts [www.dailyacts.org](http://www.dailyacts.org), California FarmLink [www.californiarmlink.org](http://www.californiarmlink.org), and Bayer Farm [www.landpaths.org](http://www.landpaths.org).

# Nurturing Petaluma's Bounty

Among the many local projects nourished by SCC's soil amendments are those of the nonprofit group Petaluma Bounty (PB). This organization helps community members grow and access healthy affordable food, and overall seeks to create "a sustainable Petaluma food system for everyone."



Amy Rice-Jones, Bounty Farm Manager, says, "There are a lot of families in Petaluma who can't afford healthy food.

Petaluma Bounty levels the playing field by making healthy, fresh food available to everyone, especially those who can't afford to buy organic. We're also about food empowerment, assisting families with the skills to grow, cook, and eat healthy food."

For the past three years, SCC has provided Petaluma Bounty with compost for its operations, both through donations and significant discounts. Rice-Jones indicates that SCC's compost is a "crucial" contribution to PB's program, helping the group sustainably grow a diverse variety of vegetables, fruits, and herbs at its five community gardens and two-acre educational Bounty Farm. Produce from the farm is distributed through PB's weekly food boxes, mobile market, and farmer's markets. SCC's products are also used for creating "victory



*Sign at Bounty Farm*

gardens" in the yards of Petaluma residents.

Rice-Jones comments, "We are thrilled to have a local company that produces compost for our needs and enriches local community projects. By supporting us, Sonoma Compost has helped strengthen Petaluma's food system."

For more about Petaluma Bounty, see [www.petalumabounty.org](http://www.petalumabounty.org) or call 775-3663.



## Your Sonoma Compost Spring Newsletter is here!

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