

Using Compost in Water Efficient Landscapes

The California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle), formerly the California Integrated Waste Management Board, is collaborating with the Department of Water Resources to promote the [Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance](#). (PDF, 417 KB)

This ordinance details water efficient landscape requirements and mandates that local agencies must adopt the revised model ordinance or equivalent no later Jan. 1, 2010 or it will be automatically adopted by statute.

CalRecycle is helping to promote the new ordinance to recycling coordinators, composters, and other stakeholders to highlight provisions within the ordinance for using compost, if used as mulch, for water conservation. Water-efficient landscape practices can greatly contribute to water conservation, and compost use can play a big role in conserving water in landscapes.

Promoting the ordinance and the use of compost as a way to meet mulch requirements within the ordinance has many benefits, including:

- Helping local jurisdiction to meet their AB 939 goals;
- Increasing markets for recovered organic materials; and
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the amount of energy required to pump water for landscape irrigation.

Specifically, the ordinance includes a definition of mulch that includes compost as an approved landscaping material for reducing evaporation, suppressing weeds, moderating soil temperature, and preventing soil erosion. The ordinance also specifies the following landscape design plan requirements for using mulch:

(A) A minimum two-inch (2") layer of mulch shall be applied on all exposed soil surfaces of planting areas except in turf areas, creeping or rooting groundcovers, or direct seeding applications where mulch is contraindicated.

(B) Stabilizing mulching products shall be used on slopes.

(C) The mulching portion of the seed/mulch slurry in hydro-seeded applications shall meet the mulching requirement.

(D) Soil amendments shall be incorporated according to recommendations of the soil report and what is appropriate for the plants selected.

Development and promotion of this ordinance are measures included in California's Scoping Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For reference, W-1 of the Scoping Plan pertains to *Water Use Efficiency* and RW-3 identifies activities to *Increase Production and Markets for Organic Products*. Information on AB 32 and California's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is available on the [Climate Change](#) Web site.

Visit CalRecycle's [Organic Materials Management](#) Web page for more information on using compost in sustainable landscapes, as well as related research, resources, and efforts of CalRecycle to support increased production and markets for organic materials, or contact the Local Assistance and Market Development Division at (916) 341-6199.

Visit the Department of Water Resources' [Water Use Efficiency](#) Web page for information about Water Use Efficiency efforts and requirements of the ordinance, or contact the Office of Water Use Efficiency at (916) 651-9667.