Composted Biosolids Q&A

- **What are biosolids?** Biosolids are nutrient-rich, treated organic matter recovered through the treatment of wastewater. This initial processing is performed by OC San (https://www.ocsan.gov/education/sewage-treatment).
- **What is composting?** Composting is the controlled microbial decomposition of organic matter (such as biosolids, green waste, wood shavings) in the presence of oxygen, into soil humus, a soil-like material and garden product. OC San contracts with compost facilities to manufacture composted biosolids that local cities are now required by the State of California (SB 1383, CalRecycle regulations) to purchase for local use.
- **What are the benefits of using composted biosolids?** This soil amendment is high in humus (organic matter), plant macro-nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium), micro-nutrients (zinc, copper, iron), and microbes to build healthy soils and plants. The organic matter in the compost helps to break up hard-packed soils by increasing pore space, allowing the soils to be more sponge-like. The soil can then hold on to the water, which reduces the amount of water needed.
- **Are composted biosolids safe for home garden use?** composted biosolids, which is treated several times to remove pathogens, has used safely for decades, both locally and nationally, and has decades of research to validate the many benefits. Orange County's biosolids are safe, highly-regulated, and meet restrictive Federal, State and local standards for recycling this resource. (https://nwbiosolids.org)
- **What is the odor associated with the compost?** Odors are associated with most fertilizing products. When composted biosolids are first watered, users may notice earthy, musty, or ammonia-like odors. There are no pathogens contained in the odor. The composting process effectively eliminates pathogens.
- **Where can I get compost?** Contact your local city and ask if they have any public compost give-away events. OC San's compost website has a list of compost dealers: www.ocsan.gov/compost.

Use Guidance

- **Water immediately after applying** so that the salt-bound-nutrients can get to the roots and **not burn existing plants**.
- The odor is generated when beneficial composting microbes are reactivated when watered. **Once the composted area dries, the odor will soon dissipate.** You can help minimize this odor by tilling well into the soil, watering immediately after applying, and then allowing the area to dry out before watering again.
- For best results, let product cool (if still hot) after incorporation and before planting or before applying to grass.

Use	Application Rate
General Soil Amendment	2 to 3 cubic yards per 1,000 square feet, till to 4 to 6-inch depth
Small planting containers (1-15 gallons)	Add 10-15% to existing container mixes
Large planting containers (greater than 15 gallons)	Add 15-25% to existing container mixes
Backfill	Blend 25% to 75% native soil.
Turf soil amendment, top dressing, and seed cover along with Hydromulching	Top Dressing – Use ½ cubic yard per 1,000 square feet. Apply a ½ inch of water immediately after application.

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ORANGE COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT