



# Composting in the Unincorporated San Diego County: What You Need to Know!



**Composting encourages waste diversion and reduces greenhouse gas emissions caused by the decomposition of organic materials in landfills and what's more, composting can reduce agricultural costs and even become a source of income.**

**There are expanded opportunities for people in the unincorporated area to get involved! What does this mean for YOU?**

## Composting in the County

Organic materials processing standards clarify the types of materials and operations allowed, and the organic material processing permits required by Planning & Development Services (PDS) to set up a composting operation within the unincorporated county.

## Types of Materials

Green	Agricultural	Food	Vegetative Food
Tree and yard trimmings	Manure, crop residues, and other agricultural materials	Processed food from restaurants and grocery stores	Fruits, vegetables, coffee grounds, and other non-processed foods

## Types of Composting Operations

Enclosed containers	Vermi-composting	Windrow Composting	Aerated Static Pile	In-Vessel Composting
Organic materials broken down in an enclosed container	Organic materials broken down with worms	Long row of compost piles turned manually or with machines	Organic material decomposition is aided through increased air flow	Composting process occurs in a drum, silo, bin etc.



# Compost Operation Overview: What is Allowed?

Type of Composting	Community Composting	Community Composting	Agriculture composting	Commercial composting	Commercial composting
Zoning or Property Type	Residential & Agricultural	Community Gardens	Existing Farm Operations	Existing Farm Operations	Based on scale of Operation
Materials	Green, agricultural, vegetative food	Green, agricultural, vegetative food, food	Green, agricultural, vegetative food, food	Green, agricultural, vegetative food, food	Green, agricultural, vegetative food, food
Volume Limit	20 yd <sup>3</sup> , enclosed	100 yd <sup>3</sup> , or 750 ft <sup>2</sup>	Any	Determined per permit	Determined per permit
PDS Permit Required*	None	None	None	Based on materials and volume	Based on materials and volume

\*Permits from other departments and agencies may still be required.

## So... What Does This Mean for You?

→ Composting is easy within the unincorporated county!

→ Check out the ordinance: [www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/zoning.html](http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/zoning.html) to determine what permit is required.

- **Residents** can share materials with neighbors and manage their own materials without a local planning permit.
- **Community gardens** can accept materials from community members for community composting purposes without a local planning permit.
- **Farms** can work with other farms to share materials, compost, and set up community composting operations without a local planning permit.
- **Commercial composting facilities** can operate with lower-level permits, lower costs, and less time for permit applications.

## Additional Requirements

A **Best Management Practice (BMP) Plan** is required for all organic material processing regardless of the permit process.

→ Learn more about a BMP Plan here:

[www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/sustainability/projects/organic-materials-ordinance-update.html](http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/sustainability/projects/organic-materials-ordinance-update.html)

## Resources & Trainings

**Interested?** The Department of Public Works (DPW) conducts compost trainings and workshops annually (through its contractor, Solana Center for Environmental Innovation) on a variety of composting topics, techniques, and practices!

→ Trainings: [www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/dpw/recycling/composting.html](http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/dpw/recycling/composting.html)

**Free Technical Assistance:** DPW offers free composting technical assistance to farms, schools, and businesses upon request. Please contact [Recycle@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Recycle@sdcounty.ca.gov) for more information. Composting education and assistance with compost and/or worm bin set up, and in some cases donation of bins, is available for schools located in the unincorporated county. Please contact the Solana Center for Environmental Innovation at (760) 436-7986 ext. 700 for more information.