Compost Classes

Because of the large variety of materials that can be composted and the differing amount of effort that can be put into making compost, the quality of compost can vary significantly. Currently there are no formal classes for grading compost. The development of classes will be dependent on the specific needs for differentiating the qualities of compost. The intention of the two suggested classes described in Table 2 below is to recognize compost that deserves a premium price when marketed relative all other compost.

Class A: Compost of this quality is suitable as a major component of a growing medium for greenhouses or nurseries. It can also be used as a landscape or home garden soil amendment.

Class B: This class compost is suitable as a soil amendment in production of field grown nursery stock, sod or row crop production.

Table 2 Suggested compost classes.

Measurement	Class A	Class B
pH	6.0 – 7.0	6.0 – 7.5
C/N ratio	< 25	< 30
Particle size (inch)	< 1/2	< 1
Moisture content (%)	< 50	-
Electrical conductivity (mmho/cm)	< 2.5	< 5.0
Man-made contaminants (objects >1 cm/ cu. ft.)	< 10	< 50

Nitrogen Availability

Nitrogen is slowly released by compost and made available for plant growth. The amount is dependent on the compost application rate and the percent of nitrogen in the compost. The table below provides an estimate of the amount of nitrogen made available from compost during a one-year period.

Table 3 Nitrogen availability from various compost application rates†.

Depth per Year	Application Rate		Percent Nitrogen of compost*				
			0.5%	1.0%	1.5%	2.0%	2.5%
inches	cu. yards/acre	tons/acre	lb of Available Nitrogen/1000 square feet*				
1/8	16.9	6.8	0.3	0.5	0.8	1.1	1.3
¼	33.8	13.5	0.5	1.1	1.8	2.2	2.7
½	67.5	27.0	1.1	2.2	3.5	4.4	5.4
1	135.0	54.0	2.2	4.4	7.0	8.8	10.9
2	270.0	108.0	4.4	8.8	14.1	17.6	21.8

†Adapted from the Composting Council

*Based on an average compost weight of 800 lb/cubic yard (wet weight)