

## Can I Sell My Compost in Bags?

When discussing the marketing side of composting with our clients, we are often asked about the feasibility of selling compost in bags. It seems intuitive that you could make considerably more money selling your compost this way. There are many challenges with this approach but certainly it can be done. Take Brian Smith, for example.

Brian and his wife Anna live on their farm in Camden, North Carolina along with their six horses and assorted farm animals. As with many farms along the eastern seaboard, they had limited acres with which to work. They decided to invest in an O<sub>2</sub>Compost system to resolve a growing manure management issue.

Brian is a contractor and is one of O<sub>2</sub>Compost's listed builders for the Cornerstone and Sterling Compost Systems. He built his 3-bin system in 2009 and has been working closely with our technical support staff to perfect his method of operation. It has been his plan all along to sell the finished compost as a way to pay for their compost system. He sells some of his compost in bulk, but has recently begun selling it in bags.



### Front of Bag:



### Back of Bag:

Carolina Compost Ingredients: Horse manure, wood pellet bedding and stall waste, leaves, grass, and other green decaying matter. Fruits, vegetables, and compostable kitchen waste.

Carolina Compost is a complete whole-foods diet for the soil that will help your garden plants grow and glow with vibrant health.

Suggested Uses for Carolina Compost: Topsoil, garden soil, compost tea, seed starter, container soil and mulch. Carolina Compost will help to revitalize and generate new growth in soils that have been depleted of their vitamins and minerals.

Recommended rates to combine with other soils or potting mix:

Minimum: 1:1  
Maximum: 10:1

After researching various nursery outlets and local garden centers, Brian and Anna have recently been selling their bagged compost at the Five Points Community Farm Market in Norfolk, Virginia, approximately 45 minutes from where they live. In Brian's words:

*"The market is located in a mixed area of Norfolk called Ghent. The market brings in mostly Virginia grown produce and meats. It has a wonderful restaurant/grille at the market where they promote local products in each dish. Brenn (an urban garden coordinator) has done several workshops this spring where she teaches a class on square foot gardening. She charges \$12 per person and has had anywhere from 5 to 100 people in each class.*

*Since Norfolk is an urban area with limited space, the small raised bed gardens have become very popular. If you didn't already know, compost is one of the three main ingredients in the square foot gardening, along with peat moss and vermiculite. So, our compost is conveniently on sale at the market where the classes are held. I sell each 1 ½ cubic foot bag to Brenn for \$15 and she turns right around and sells it for \$22.50! At this rate, we figure that we are earning about \$250 per cubic yard and Brenn is earning an additional \$125."*

Because all horse manure compost is somewhat lumpy and chunky, even when it is well cured, Brian processes his finished compost through a tractor-driven limb shredder to homogenize it and create a uniform texture. This further aerates the compost and produces a well blended material with a Carbon to Nitrogen ratio of approximately 25:1. The bagging is done by hand, and the bags are tied with twine along with a packet that contains organic carrot seeds.

Brian continues:

*“Our goal right now is to break even on what we have invested in selling the product (bags, shredder, tags, t-shirts, trademark). I think that this first year is going to be and has already been an unbelievable learning experience for us. In the near future, of course we want to pay for the cost of our O2Comost System.*

*I do think that the sky is the limit as far as the business of selling compost. It seems to be a niche market and has been really fun for us to talk to people about composting and to educate them about the importance of proper manure management. I am a building contractor by trade (which seem to be a dime a dozen around here) and composting is something that seems to be very up and coming with the green movement and people are genuinely interested in it.”*