



FACT SHEET – IMPROVING RESOURCE RECOVERY CENTRES

Garden organics and timber

Garden organics and timber are organic material suitable for processing into compost, soil conditioners, mulch and wood chip products. This includes grass clippings, small branches, prunings, leaves, flowers and un-treated (clean) timber off-cuts or pallets.

Items classifying as garden organics and timber

Items that classify as garden organics and timber in this fact sheet include:

- › grass clippings, garden prunings and weeds
- › tree branches, limbs and small stumps (less than 100mm in diameter)
- › clean timber materials (e.g. timber pallets, untreated timber offcuts).

Please note that garden organics mixed with food waste are generally not accepted at resource recovery centres/transfer stations, which are instead transported directly to a suitable composting/processing facility. Please see the food and garden organics fact sheet for more information on how to manage mixed food and garden organics at resource recovery centres/transfer stations.

Regulatory requirements and standards (OH&S and environmental)

Various acts, regulations and guidelines apply to the storage, transfer, transport, recycling and processing of garden organics and timber at resource recovery centres/transfer stations. These include:

- › Occupational health and safety (OH&S):
 - Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Victorian Government)
 - Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007 (Victorian Government)
 - Guide to Best Practice at Resource Recovery Centres (Sustainability Victoria)
 - Code of Practice for Manual Handling 2000 (WorkSafe Victoria).
- › Environmental:
 - Environmental Protection Act 1970 (Victorian Government)
 - Environment Protection (Industrial Waste Resource) Regulations 2009 (EPA Victoria)
 - Guide to Best Practice for Organics Recovery (Sustainability Victoria)
 - Environmental Guidelines for Composting and Other Organic Recycling Facilities (EPA Victoria).

Potential hazards and OH&S requirements

If not managed correctly, handling garden organics and timber items can pose risks to workers, the community, public health and the environment. These hazards include:

- › sharp branches, thorns, wood splinters and protruding nails that may cause injury
- › dust that may be inhaled
- › concealed snakes, spiders and insects that may bite or sting
- › plants that may cause skin irritation or allergic reactions
- › heavy and awkward items that may cause injury
- › chemicals and substances in treated timber that are potentially toxic (e.g. lead-based paint, copper chrome arsenate posts).

When handling garden organics and timber, it is important that resource recovery centre/transfer station operators:

- › follow correct safe manual handling and management procedures (refer to WorkSafe Victoria's Code of Practice for Manual Handling)
- › use equipment to aid handling (e.g. forklifts and front-end loaders)
- › wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Acceptance criteria

Criteria for accepting garden organics includes the following:

- › Separate garden organics from other wastes (e.g. garbage, food waste, soil, building rubble, plastics, other timber) within loads.
- › Avoid accepting branches or limbs greater than 100mm in diameter.
- › Remove any materials that may contaminate the garden organics, including treated pine (copper chrome arsenate), laminated timber, medium density fibreboard (MDF), plywood and particle board from loads.

Criteria for accepting clean timber includes the following:

- › Clean timber should be separated from other wastes (e.g. garbage, building rubble, plastics) within the load.
- › Separate any treated timber materials not considered to be clean timber (including treated pine, laminated timber, MDF, plywood and particleboard).
- › Limit accepting materials with nails/bolts or other imbedded or attached products.

Storage guidelines

Resource recovery centres/transfer stations should strive for storage of garden organics to meet best practice, in addition to minimum requirements and compliance with regulatory requirements.

Best practice storage of garden organics and timber should be undertaken on sealed areas, where users can also drop-off their loads.

These best practice activities should be undertaken in addition to the minimum requirements, which include the following:

- Areas should have sufficient space for separate stockpiles and be located on level hardstand areas.
- Areas must not be adjacent to flammable materials or other potentially combustible vegetation.
- Water supply and equipment for dust suppression and fire control measures should be accessible within the vicinity of storage areas.
- Areas should have installed protection from wind-blown litter.
- Storm water run-off should be managed properly and diverted to appropriate leachate management areas/systems.
- Only manageable quantities of material should be stored, consistent with the storage area size and frequency of collection or onsite shredding. This is specific to each site. Please refer to Sustainability Victoria's Guide to Best Practice for Organics Recovery for more details on these storage limits.
- Storage and rope-off areas for garden organics and timber should be suitably labelled (refer to Sustainability Victoria's signage library).

Transport and re-use/recycling guidelines

Garden organics and timber can either be transported to a suitable licenced processing facility (e.g. for composting or shredding) or processed on-site (e.g. mulching/chipping). These products can be sold or provided free to customers or used in rehabilitation (e.g. for landfills) and beautification activities. Material that is not suitable for processing (e.g. contaminated timber) should be transported to an appropriate facility for treatment or to a suitable landfill for disposal.

Best practice and minimum standards in the transport and recycling of garden organics and timber are not significantly differentiated and the following standards should be met at resource recovery centres/transfer stations:

If transporting off-site

- transport should occur in waste licenced transport vehicles to sites that are licenced by EPA to receive, store and/or process the garden organics or timber
- transport should occur on a regular basis to prevent stockpiles exceeding the site's storage limits
- appropriate controls should be in place to minimise odour and scattering of materials during all stages of transport (e.g. collection vehicle appropriate covers)
- contaminants should be removed prior to transporting garden organics or clean timber off-site, where possible.

If processing onsite

- green organics and timber should not be burnt
- contaminants should be removed prior to processing onsite to prevent contamination of the processed products, where possible
- reference should be made to the EPA's Environmental Guidelines for Composting and Other Organic Recycling Facilities where green organics processing is to occur on-site
- garden organics and timber may be shredded or chipped onsite by engaging contract shredding operators on a frequency that maintains suitable site stockpiles (e.g. monthly)
- garden organics may be able to be used for rehabilitation of the site (e.g. on a closed landfill).

Record keeping guidelines

It is important to keep records of garden organics and timber received, processed and sent for recycling at resource recovery centres/transfer stations. This is to enable tracking of resource recovery from the site, as well as managing on-site storage.

Record keeping requirements related to garden organics and timber include:

- recording at the gatehouse the receipt of a green organics and timber volumes/tonnes
- conducting monthly stocktakes of garden organics and timber being stored on-site, to ensure the site does not exceed to the recommended maximum amount of garden organics and timber stored
- recording the weight or volume of garden organics processed on-site or collected from the site by the approved contractor.

Framework for continuous improvement

The priority for any decision regarding the acceptance and management of garden organics and timber should be to divert these materials from landfill. This can be achieved by transporting these materials to a suitable facility or processing on-site into compost, soil conditioner and mulch products (while ensuring the OH&S of all stakeholders, namely operators and customers, and the environment are protected).

Framework for the continuous improvement of recycling and resource recovery practises for green organics and timber includes:

- communicate and engage with other local municipalities to investigate consolidated collection/joint procurement activities (e.g. engaging a single contractor for shredding over multiple sites)
- seek out and build relationships with local collection and recycling contractors, who meet the relevant standards and regulations
- continuously improve storage areas, working towards storing green organics and timber in well-defined areas/bays/containers, where users can drop-off particular materials
- providing opportunity to supply site customers processed products such as compost, mulch or wood chip (either from on-site processing or from an off-site processor).

Further information

For further information and resources, please contact Sustainability Victoria on 03 8626 8700 or visit www.sustainability.vic.gov.au