
Music Festival Composting Toilets

Joe Jenkins

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Here is a quick description of the process:



This is the basic toilet (above). There is a white toilet receptacle underneath the seat. The one sitting there on the right is empty, to be used when the one under the toilet is full.



This is a closer look (above). The toilet receptacle is 5 gallons and lifts out (a white bucket). The rectangular tubs hold the sawdust cover material. It's the cover material that prevents the odor, prevents flies and prepares the human excrement for composting (urine and feces and toilet paper, even the rolls in the center of the paper).



This is a double toilet (one on each side). The stacked white containers inside are empty.



This is a row of toilets. They were built using salvaged materials. The white container sitting outside is full, waiting to be collected.



This instruction sheet was included inside every toilet.



Food scraps were collected in containers of different colors (not white). The collection containers were therefore color-coded.



The toilet containers were collected twice a day, about 125 each day, and brought to a compost area on site. They were emptied into the compost pile, rinsed into the pile, then they were filled with a couple inches of sawdust (as shown above) prior to returning them to the toilets. The containers in the truck above are cleaned, primed, and ready to return to the toilets.



Containers being emptied and rinsed into the compost bin.



This is what the compost bins looked like. The near bin has salvaged wood sides. The far bin has straw bales sides. The deposits are covered with straw or hay each time to prevent odor and flies. They're adding the straw cover material above. The straw bale bin shown had another level of straw bales by the time it was all done. Toilet material was collected from 400-500 people over a ten day period, plus workers and staff who were there for set-up prior to the festival and after.



Another view of the bins. They could have saved money by building both bins of wood as straw bales are expensive in California (although they can use the straw bale walls next year for the compost cover material). The bins would have needed less capacity if they had used a more appropriate cover material in the bins from the start, but they were using a very coarse material (pond reeds with root balls) to cover the bins and it was eating up the space, allowing some odor to escape and attracting flies. I corrected this by suggesting they don't use the rough material and use the straw instead and all of these problems disappeared - odor, flies, less space required. This is the advantage of me being involved, since I have years of experience with this process (29 years of humanure composting on my property in western Pennsylvania).

The other obvious requirement for this system to work well is labor. In the case shown above, there was a dedicated work crew coordinated by a hard-working, responsible and conscientious leader. The humanure process saved the festival probably \$8,000.00 (\$4,000.00 saved last year with half as many toilets) and is creating a stockpile of compost, which should be saleable, or at least usable, once finished.

Take care,

Joe Jenkins

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