

MiSustainable Holland

About this series

The MiSustainable Holland column is a collection of community voices sharing updates about local sustainability initiatives.

This Week's Sustainability Framework Theme:

Community Knowledge: The collective knowledge and energy of the community is an incredible resource that must be channeled to where it is needed.

Compost waste materials for healthy gardening

By Elizabeth Kelley
ODC Network

For Holland residents seeking to cultivate a more sustainable lifestyle, composting offers an obtainable opportunity. Home composting is a highly effective and environmentally responsible practice, yielding significant benefits for both personal gardens and the broader ecosystem.

By responsibly diverting organic waste like food scraps, coffee grounds, grass clippings, leaves, and cardboard, residents can significantly reduce the volume of waste sent to landfills. This minimizes the environmental burden of waste and combats methane emissions, a potent greenhouse gas produced by decomposing organic matter in landfills.

However, the benefits of composting extend far beyond waste reduction. This process converts organic waste into nutrient-dense compost, a natural fertilizer that will enhance your garden's health. Compost enriches the soil with essential nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, all of which are critical for optimal plant growth.

Unlike chemical fertilizers, which release nutrients rapidly and can lead to harmful runoff that pollutes local water sources, compost provides a slow-release of nutrients, promoting long-term soil fertility without the risk of chemical contamination.

Furthermore, compost improves soil structure, enhancing its ability to infiltrate water and retain moisture. This translates to increased water efficiency in your garden, reducing or eliminating the need for frequent watering, especially when healthy soil is paired with native plants. For those who don't have produce gardens, compost can be used to fertilize ornamental landscape beds and houseplants.

Fortunately, the City of Holland actively embraces the power of composting, fostering a supportive environment for residents who seek to participate. [Hope College](#) serves as a leading example, maintaining an on-campus composting program that utilizes food scraps and yard waste from participating student housing for on-site soil enhancement.

Additionally, Hope's dining halls demonstrate a commitment to responsible waste management by collecting food scraps, paper products, and compostable dinnerware which are then diverted to a regional composting facility.

The [Holland Board of Public Works \(BPW\)](#) further supports resident participation by offering a wealth of resources on its website for setting up and maintaining backyard compost bins. This empowers residents that want to do it themselves and see their kitchen scraps get turned into compost that grows next year's vegetables.

For those seeking a more hands-off option, private companies like [Organicycle](#) and [Arrowaste](#) offer curbside collection services specifically for compostable materials, further simplifying the process for residents.

[Eighth Day Farm](#), a local urban farm, also contributes to the composting movement in Holland. Their program lets residents participate by offering a compost pick-up service, utilizing the collected materials in their on-farm composting operation.

This collaboration shows the interconnectedness of sustainable practices, highlighting how individual actions can contribute to community-wide environmental benefits.

- *Elizabeth Kelley is going into her senior year at Hope College studying environmental science with a focus in biology and a minor in global health. She is currently a Land & Water intern at the ODC Network.*