



## Composting Cannabis Waste

Composters, like cannabis growers, care about conserving our natural resources. Sending green waste, like the cannabis plant itself, to the landfill means that all of the stored nutrients are wasted; composting helps return those nutrients to the soil so they can be reused for later harvests! Not to mention, composting releases significantly less greenhouse gases into the atmosphere than landfills.

When growing cannabis, much of the plant ends up being discarded as waste. New MED regulations (Jan. 2021) say that stalks, stems, fan leaves, and roots can be transported to a composting company such as A1 Organics without being mixed with other waste: the compost process itself makes that waste “unusable and unrecognizable.” However, Regulated Marijuana waste (buds, flowers, and processed waste, e.g. edibles, tinctures, and extracts) must still be mixed with at least 50% non-marijuana waste before leaving the Regulated Marijuana business. Regulations dictate that this regulated marijuana waste must be rendered “unusable and unrecognizable” by grinding it and mixing it with any of the following materials: “paper waste, plastic waste, cardboard waste, food waste, grease or other compostable oil waste, bokashi or other compost activators, soil, sawdust, and manure.” However, mixing the regulated marijuana waste with non-compostable materials makes the whole mixture unfit for composting, and then everything must be sent to a landfill!

Contamination in compost can be tricky. Some may see that “cardboard waste” is an acceptable mixing ingredient for marijuana waste, and will throw cardboard boxes into a grinder as-received to mix with the marijuana waste. However, many parts of cardboard boxes are not made of cardboard and are not compostable, such as stickers, tape, and/or staples. Composting is a controlled microbial degradation of organic matter, and materials like tape, plastics, wax-paper, and metal staples are not made of organic matter and do not break down during the composting process. Those contaminants stay through to the final product, and nobody wants to use compost full of metal staples!

### A1 Organics' Recommendation:

Our goal is to accept as much compostable material as possible so it stays out of landfills and can be beneficially reused, so we want to make sure that marijuana waste is prepared in a way that we can accept the material. If you are sending marijuana stalks, stems, fan leaves, or roots, please do not add other materials to the waste before sending it to be composted: additional waste mixing is not required in the regulations, and it can make composting more difficult. One method that we recommend for regulated marijuana waste is to mix it with brush/tree trimmings prior to grinding. These materials can often be found free of charge by contacting a local landscaping company and arranging a drop-off of their trimmings. This type of mixed material containing landscapers' trimmings and marijuana waste is acceptable for composting at A1 Organics.

Some materials used for growing marijuana are **non-organic and cannot be mixed in with the marijuana waste in order for it to be composted.** Those include, but are not limited to, **fiberglass growing media, plastics, and tape.** However organic growing media, such as coco coir, is ok for use in composting.

Please email our **Technical Advisor, Tanner Phelps**, at [tannerphelps@a1organics.com](mailto:tannerphelps@a1organics.com) with any questions on material acceptance for composting.

