The Compost Outreach Project began in 2011 as a partnership between WSU Extension Snohomish County, the Snohomish Conservation District and Cedar Grove Composting. Cedar Grove wanted to tap into the agriculture industry as a market for their finished compost and WSU wanted to research and evaluate the benefits of commercially-produced food and yard waste compost in local crop production.

The Compost Outreach Project has expanded with diverse funding sources and partnerships. The two-part program aims to provide as many farmers as possible the opportunity to utilize the compost through on-farm Research and Demonstration Trials over a variety of cropping systems.

Research Results:

**BAU** = Business as Usual
**COM** = BAU + Compost

**Triticale Yield, 2011**

- **COM**: 23.5
- **BAU**: 12.7

**Pumpkin Yield, 2012**

- **COM**: 56.1
- **BAU**: 43.9

**Sweet Corn, 2013**

- **COM2yr**: Marketable Ear Weight Per Acre
- **COM3yr**: Marketable Ear Weight Per Acre

Research Trials:

- **Triticale**, 2011 (18.5 dry tons of compost/acre\(^*\)) - 100% increase in yield
- **Pumpkins**, 2011 & 2012. 2012- (27.5 dry tons/acre) - 20% increase in yield
- **Field Corn**, 2012 (13 dry tons/acre) - No significant difference in yield
- **Field Corn**, 2013 (7.25 dry tons/acre) - Yield results pending
- **Sweet Corn**, 2013 (15 dry tons/acre) - 24% increase in weight of marketable corn ears between three years of compost treatment and control

\(^*\) assuming 50% moisture content of compost
Demonstration Trials:

Lettuce Trial

- 59 trials (2011-2013)
- Farmers receive a donated ~50 cu. yd. load of compost and apply it alongside a business as usual (BAU) treatment
- Crops: Blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, hazelnuts, potatoes, hay, haylage, pasture grass, broccoli, lettuce, flowers (multiple species), pumpkins, turf grass, field corn, sweet corn, nursery and orchard trees, and more

Are You a Local Farmer?

GET INVOLVED!

For more information:
Visit the program website:
www.snohomish.wsu.edu/compost

Or call the program coordinator:
Hallie Harness
(425) 357-6026
hallie.harness@wsu.edu

2013 Farmer Survey Responses: n=29

Effect of compost on crop production:
- 4% Somewhat Adverse Effect
- 7% No Perceived Difference
- 36% Improved
- 53% Greatly Improved

Effect of compost on soil quality:
- 24% No Perceived Difference
- 69% Improved
- 7% Greatly Improved

Lessons learned from farmer correspondence and focus groups:

- Farmers are looking at compost as a substitute for poultry manure
- Farmers understand the benefits of increasing and maintaining organic matter in their soils, and see compost as a good method of doing so
- Many farmers are moving away from commercial fertilizers, but know that compost is not a direct substitute
- Several would not have tried compost without this program
- Barriers to compost use include spreading (time, equipment) and compost price
- Some farmers believe that compost use is more feasible in small scale specialty crop operations than large scale commodity crop farming