Composting Enhances Soil and Protects Watersheds

Healthy soils are essential for protecting watersheds. Compost is the best way to add organic matter—which is vital—to soils.

When added to soil, compost can filter out urban stormwater pollutants by an astounding 60-95%.

IT’S ALL ABOUT THE SOIL

COMPOST improves biological, chemical, and physical characteristics of soil.

- Enhances plant disease suppression
- Increases soil fertility
- Increases microbial activity
- Increases ability to store nutrients (such as cation exchange capacity)
- Improves soil structure
- Improves water retention
- Adds humus, keeping soil particles stuck together
- Reduces need for chemicals
- Improves resiliency to floods and droughts
- Converts nitrogen into a more stable and less mobile form and phosphorous into a less soluble form
- Protects against soil desertification and soil erosion
- Compost helps reduce stormwater runoff because it can hold ~5x its weight in water.

Compost serves as a filter and sponge. It immobilizes and degrades pollutants, improving water quality.

Sources:
- Bobby Bell and Brenda Platt, Building Healthy Soils with Compost to Protect Watersheds, Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR), June 2014.
- United States Composting Council (USCC), "Specify and Use COMPOST for LEED & Sustainable Sites Projects: A Natural Connection"

To learn more, visit: ilsr.org/compost-impacts