

A faint, stylized illustration in the background shows a greenhouse structure with a grid of beams and a series of plants growing in long, raised beds. The illustration is rendered in a light gray color, blending into the white background.

Buyers Guide for Recycled Organics Products

2007

Third Edition

Supporting consumers to differentiate between high and low quality recycled organics products and to identify the best product for their needs

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Third Edition.
Second Edition, 2003.
First Published, 2001.

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ISBN 1 876850 32 9



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RESOURCE^{NSW}

This package has undergone national peer review by a range of technical and industry experts (see acknowledgments) and has been endorsed by COMPOST NSW and the NSW branch of the Waste Management Association of Australia.



Preface to the *Buyers Guide for Recycled Organics Products*

This series of Information Sheets has been produced to support the continuing development of the Recycled Organics (RO) industry in New South Wales by identifying issues of relevance to consumers of RO products, and providing consumer resources to support the selection of appropriate products for their particular needs on the basis of risk minimisation and maximum environmental benefit.

A recent report entitled 'Environment Australia Organics Market Development Strategy' by Meinhardt *et al.* (1999) indicated that market acceleration for RO products is dependent on the sale of quality products that meet the needs of specific market sectors. As there are many RO products that may lack certification or some other form of quality assurance (e.g. laboratory testing of products), consumers need to be aware of quality and value for money issues prior to purchasing and using such products.

Difficulties in selecting appropriate products can contribute to disappointing results from the use of poorly manufactured products or the inappropriate use of products.

Improved product quality and better labelling to inform consumers as to how products can be beneficially used will support RO market development and penetration into areas where RO products are not traditionally used.

Quality RO products are manufactured when an organisation employs elements of best practice — that is, strong process control to ensure that products conform to previously designed specifications, and that any risks associated with the feedstock materials are managed.

Australian Standards for RO products have been published for composts, soil conditioners and mulches (AS 4454), general and specialist potting mixes (AS 3743), soils for landscaping and garden use (AS 4419), and for products used for playground surfacing (AS 4422) to reduce the risk of injuries suffered by children from playgroup mishaps. Increased knowledge of, and adherence to these Standards and to increased process control by manufacturers is necessary for the reliable manufacture of higher quality products for use by consumers. Such commitment to quality will assist in the consolidation of existing market share, and protect the reputation of RO products in the market by helping consumers differentiate between high quality/low risk RO products.

This package of Information Sheets have been developed to complement existing information resources and to provide an easy-to-read, step by step process to the selection and use of quality RO products. To further assist buyers with product selection, an Internet-based product selector has been developed and is available for use at <http://www.recycledorganics.com/>

Practical guidance to the identification of key indicators of quality, such as product compliance to relevant Australian Standards, is given in this package of Information Sheets and Internet resources.

1. Information Sheets in “*Buyers Guide for Recycled Organics Products*”

This package contains six Information Sheets plus an Internet based product selector and Brochure:

- Information Sheet No. 6-1: Buy recycled organics products
- Information Sheet No. 6-2: Benefits of organic matter in soil
- Information Sheet No. 6-3: Methods of increasing organic matter in soil
- Information Sheet No. 6-4: Buyer beware: Quality issues for recycled organics products
- Information Sheet No. 6-5: Recycled organics product categories and standards
- Information Sheet No. 6-6: Use of RO products - Importance of electrical conductivity
- RO Product Selector Available from <http://www.recycledorganics.com>
- Brochure Available from <http://www.recycledorganics.com>

2. Other Packages

A series of eight packages are available on important aspects of recycled organics industry development. These are listed below.

- Package 1: Establishing a licensed composting facility;
- Package 2: Guide to developing a process control system for a composting facility;
- Package 3: Producing quality compost;
- Package 4: Guide to selecting, developing and marketing value-added recycled organics products;
- Package 5: Composting science for industry;
- Package 6: Buyers guide for recycled organics products
- Package 7: How to use recycled organics products;
- Package 8: Occupational health and safety and commercial composting.

All of these packages are obtainable from <http://www.recycledorganics.com>

3. Who should read the Information Sheets?

This package of Information Sheets has been developed primarily for large purchasers of RO products in the urban amenity market segment including Local Government, State Government and industry.

More specifically, the package of Information Sheets have been developed for:

- Local council purchasing officers;
- State Government purchasing officers;
- Large private sector buyers of RO (including property developers);
- Marketing agencies;

- Potential buyers and users of RO;
- Waste educators;
- Horticulturalists;
- Landscape architects;
- Landscapers;
- Purchasing officers;
- Resource NSW officers, and
- Industry consultants.

4. Terminology

The terminology in this package is consistent with that officially adopted by the NSW Waste Boards (now Resource NSW) in July 2000. That is, compostable organic materials (garden organics, food organics, wood and timber) are processed by the recycled organics industry into a range of recycled organics products. Other terminology is consistent with the nationally peer reviewed *RO Dictionary and Thesaurus: Standard terminology for the recycled organics industry*, produced by the Recycled Organics Unit. This document is freely downloadable from <http://www.rolibrary.com>

5. How to cite this publication

This publication consists of a series of Information Sheets that are compiled into a set. When citing information from this publication, the set of Information Sheets must be cited (not individual Information Sheets), as shown below:

Recycled Organics Unit (2003). *Buyers Guide for Recycled Organics Products: Supporting consumers to differentiate between high and low quality recycled organics products and to identify the best products for their needs*. Third Edition. Recycled Organics Unit, internet publication: <http://www.recycledorganics.com>

6. Acknowledgements

The development of this package has been funded by Resource NSW.