

## Compost for Vegetable Growers

### Fact Sheet 4: Choosing a Supplier



The right supplier will help you select the product that matches your broader production goals and specific performance requirements. The supplier must also meet your quality assurance requirements. The best suppliers will also work with you to develop products to match your particular specifications.

#### Quality assurance



The benchmark for compost quality in Australia is compliance with the Australian Standard for Composts, Soil Conditioners and Mulches (AS 4454). Suppliers of product to organic growers must also be organically certified.

- The highest form of guarantee is certification to AS 4454. Compost producers offering this level of guarantee undergo a rigorous review by an independent third party certifying body. Quality control and on-going compliance are key components of the certification system.
- Many compost producers are not certified to AS 4454, but provide their own guarantee that their product meets the Standard. You can still evaluate these suppliers and their products by asking a few simple questions. The checklist overleaf can help (see page 2).
- Compliance with AS 4454 will not necessarily meet requirements for many applications. The compost supplier must understand your needs and address your questions adequately. In particular, they need to provide you with a regular supply of consistent product and may be able to supply testimonials for specific uses.



Compost heaps tagged for traceability purposes

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Further information is available from:

Primary Industries Research Victoria (PIRVic) Knoxfield Centre, Private Bag 15, Ferntree Gully Delivery Centre, Victoria 3156. Phone: 03 9210 9222 www.dpi.vic.gov.au

EcoRecycle Victoria Level 2, 478 Albert St. East Melbourne Victoria 3002 Phone: 03 9639 3322 www.ecorecycle.vic.gov.au

Department of Agriculture, Western Australia, Locked Bag 4, Bentley Delivery Centre, Western Australia 6983, Phone: 08 9368 3333 www.agric.wa.gov.au

## Recognising certified quality compost

**A**n AS 4454 certified product has:

- The Standards Mark ('five-ticks' logo) clearly visible
- The Standards Australia Manufacturer's Licence Number visible
- A specification sheet supplied with it

## Non-certified quality compost

**U**se this checklist to evaluate non-certified products and their suppliers:

- Producer guarantees the product meets the Australian Standard or other recognised standard (e.g. Organics standard)
- A specification sheet is supplied with the product
- Producer shows traceability from raw material to final product
- Producer shows production records (e.g. temperature monitoring)
- Producer regularly tests products to the Australian Standard or other recognised standard (e.g. Organics standard)

## Final selection criteria

**S**uppliers of both certified and non-certified products should be able to:

- Offer a consistent and regular supply of quality compost
- Show you documented evidence of a quality control system
- Answer any questions you have about the products they offer
- Tell you what a product is made from and how it is made
- Understand your needs and manufacture a product to suit
- Rectify and improve their products based on their performance
- Provide contact details of satisfied customers

Whether you are interested in trying compost for the first time or require a regular supply, these checklists will give you the confidence to choose the right supplier to work with.

Composted products often need to be developed and refined with some degree of 'trial and error', so it is important to establish a relationship with a reputable supplier that you feel you can work with for mutual benefit.