

A GARDENER'S GUIDE...



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING A MANURE SOURCE:

Adapted from Manure Share Fact Sheet. Joshua Monaghan . King Conservation District.
935 Powel Ave SW, Renton, WA 95960. http://www.kingcd.org/manure_share_factsheet.pdf

- 1. How much do you need?** Calculate volume needed (depth x area). Convert to Cubic Yards (27 cubic feet in one cubic yard). Plan for the number of truck loads required for target volume. Note: most pickups can only handle $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 yard at a time. If you are getting a lot of material, chose a farm with a **Loader** or plan to spend a lot of time with your shovel loading your truck.
- 2. Will you need to pick up the manure during the winter?** Some of the farms have manure piles that are not accessible during the winter (Check “Accessible” column on the source list).
- 3. Are you looking for “Aged” or “Fresh” material?** Older material may be closer to “finished compost” than newer material. See the “Age” column. If you want old material, be sure to tell the farmer. Often the oldest material is at the back of the pile and the material at the front of the pile is from yesterday. Let the farmer know what you want; s/he may be able to load the older material for you. It is worth asking on the phone. NOTE: the only way to determine if a pile is composted properly is to have the pile tested (usually by a soil lab).
- 4. What is your end use?** If mulch for landscaping, a manure pile with mostly bedding is a good choice. However, for composting for your garden, a material with little or no bedding is better (check the “manure:bedding” column). Know that some beddings will compost faster (straw breaks down quicker and cedar shavings take a very long time). As a general rule, a manure to bedding ratio of 1:1 or higher (1:0, 20:1, 3:1, etc.) is more desirable for composting.
- 5. Consider weed management!** Weeds can be a real problem with some compost piles. Contrary to popular belief, horses don’t “poop” out significantly more weeds than cows. Weeds present in manure piles are generated primary from seeds of weed plants growing near the manure pile. Weed Control: One, keep the pile covered with a tarp to prevent weed seed invasion, and two, compost the pile. The heat and time involved in composted will kill most weed seeds. Because we can’t vouch for the weed seed content of these manure piles, we highly encourage you to cover and compost this material for a month or two before applying it to your garden.