

COMPOSTING MATTERS

by Paul van der Werf

"The bark fines, a byproduct of bark chipping, was found to be a suitable replacement for peat moss, if used in the correct way."



All Treat Farms Inc.

The first in our Composting Pioneers series

The new century is no longer new as this decade rapidly comes to a close.

The beginning of the new century brought an ephemeral kind of hope associated with "turning over a new leaf" even if the only thing different was the order of the numbers we use to express what year we're in.

We're entering a new phase in the management of organic wastes where we may very well have to do more than "turn over a new leaf." The default processing option continues to be composting but changes are emerging on the horizon, some approaching rapidly. I think ten years from now what we do will change dramatically; in 20 years, who knows?

In 1990 we thought pulling organic waste out of landfill was a great idea because it represented waste diversion. Today I like to think we have moved far beyond that. It's business first with waste diversion and reduction of greenhouse gases secondary or complimentary to the process.

Although self proclaimed, and unlikely to result in a new statutory holiday, I view 2010 as the 20th anniversary of modern composting in Canada. Sure we have been composting a lot longer — as we'll find out. However, this is a great time to reflect on where we've come and where we're headed.

Starting with this column, over the next year I'll offer readers a series entitled "Composting Pioneers." The half-dozen columns will then be



COMPOSTING PIONEERS

assembled into a single document to commemorate this 20th anniversary. My first example is All Treat Farms Inc.

All Treat Farms Inc.

The owners of All Treat Farms Inc., before it was even called All Treat, came up with an idea that was simple. Dehydrate manure and put it in a bag. Then convince someone to buy it.

That's how it was back in 1955 when LaVerne and Freda White used a dehydrator that they'd purchased to produce feed from alfalfa to dehydrate manure. This lateral move, one of many, typifies the All Treat story of entrepreneurship.

The Whites were farmers from Arthur, Ontario. As George White, All Treat's current president puts it, "Farming was a seven-days-a-week job and my parents wanted to move away from that."

So, what to do with the idea?

How do you convince people to buy what others recommend you "store high in transit"? It seemed beyond the pale. You would have to imagine it being sold at Toronto stores such as Simpsons and Eatons. Back then White says, "Demonstrators used to demonstrate the product to customers at the stores." Now we get Vince shouting at us about Shamwow. Back then the demonstrators were "good looking women," says White, stressing quickly that he was only a kid at the time. "They gift wrapped the bag and gave it to the customer."



The farm property in the 1950s and today. The modern facility utilizes the GORE™ composting system to manage up to 80,000 tonnes/year of municipal organic wastes

COMPOSTING MATTERS



Various All Treat Farms bagged products from over the years, starting with cattle manure from 1950 through contemporary compost.

To reduce the odour of the dehydrated manure upon rehydration, All Treat started composting the manure. Customers already knew what they were buying; there was no point giving them an extra reminder. The stabilized product also held promise of better performance in their garden.

And so it continued with the development of a number of garden products, to add to the company's animal feed, bird seed and other products.

"Back then all our products ended in the word Treat: Garden Treat, Worm Treat and so on," says White. "When we incorporated we decided to call ourselves All Treat."

In the intervening years All Treat got into the bark chip markets. Back then all of this was imported into Canada from the United States. However, the forestry industry in Ontario was burying or burning its bark.

"In the early 1980s we worked with what was then called the Ontario

Development Corporation to purchase equipment and find sources of bark," says White. "We started to produce a local bark chip. At the same time we were looking for a replacement for peat moss."

The bark fines, a byproduct of bark chipping, was found to be a suitable replacement for peat moss, if used in the correct way.

"This is where we had to learn how to compost and where we developed our composting expertise," says White. "Bark fines could make a great growing media but if they weren't composted properly they would kill plants."

Ultimately this work solved two problems: A viable replacement for peat moss was created and a waste management issue was addressed.

While their initial efforts focused on dealing with agricultural wastes and then forestry wastes the 1990s saw them branch into residential waste.

The markets and populations where the company sold its products

COMPOSTING MATTERS

“The future of organic waste processing includes anaerobic digestion, no question about it,” says White.”

grew and generated more waste. In the same way as burying forestry waste became less acceptable, questions were asked about what we were throwing in landfills.

At the same time it was also becoming less acceptable to mine wetlands for peat (a common practice at the time). As White puts it, “The writing was on the wall. We needed a replacement product that we could put into the bag.”

Using its previous composting experience, All Treat set up a compost facility to accept municipal leaf-and-yard wastes for composting.

Current operations

This evolution continues in the 2000s. In 1955 the population of Toronto was about 1.3 million. Today the Greater Toronto Area has a population of greater than five million. This market continues to purchase compost products for its gardens, while households themselves remain a significant source of organic waste. In addition to leaf-and-yard waste col-

The AMRC is now the MWA...



with a new website to match our new name

www.municipalwaste.ca



BAYCON ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING

Baycon Environmental offers personalized, responsive service, budget sensitive project solutions and years of invaluable project management experience.

- Site Remediation
- Site Services & Site Clearing
- Mold Abatement
- Asbestos Abatement
- Phase I, II, III env. assessments
- Demolition
- Licensed under M.O.E.E
- Licensed under T.S.S.A

www.Baycon.ca

Telephone: 416.405.8880 • Fax: 416.405.8830

Half The Time, Twice The Profit
With FastPace Roll-Off Software



Integrates with



USA: 888.935.1911
Canada: 952.955.3862

FASTPaceSoftware.com



Find your green.

- Private & Public Sectors
- Residential, IC&I and C&D waste streams
- Waste auditing
- Waste diversion planning
- Composting, MBT, Recycling, E-Waste

Paul van der Werf, M.Sc. | 519-645-7733 | 877-801-7733 | 2cg.ca

Waste Management Consulting Services

THE CompuWeigh™ SYSTEM

offers Superior Software and Service for:

- Landfills
- Transfer Stations
- Recycling
- MRF
- Routing
- Container Tracking
- Dispatching

Call us for a **FREE** internet demo at (410) 329 1300 or download it from our website at:

ParadigmSoftware.com

Setting the standard in Solid Waste Software...

PARADIGMSOFTWARE
The Standard in Weighing Software



lection, most of the GTA now has access to green bin programs to divert food and other organic wastes.

All Treat invested in a GORE™ composting system to manage up to 80,000 tonnes/year of these municipal wastes, including the leaf-and-yard wastes but also green bin wastes and IC&I wastes.

As they have shown over and over, a waste product can be used to create a marketable product.

“Our greatest strength is marketing,” says White. “We used composting to fill market needs. There was a time where we could say that our compost product could be found in any city or town in Canada.” The market has evolved and there are many more players. Their current market focus is Ontario and eastwards.

When asked what he thinks of the current state of organic waste processing, White’s response is very illuminating: “When we started in this businesses Ontario was very agricultural. People understood farming: the livestock, the fields and the odour. The population has changed.

“We’ve moved to zero tolerance for odour and the reality is that we can’t realistically get there without spending a lot of money. The costs to achieve this will be high and I’m afraid we could go backwards from recycling and back to landfilling which is cheaper.”

And what of the future?

“The future of organic waste processing includes anaerobic digestion, no question about it,” says White. “Composting and AD can work hand in hand.”

Something will have to give though.

“I went go Germany for a week to look at AD facilities,” White says. “Germany has moved to ensure that all organic wastes stay out of landfill. There are AD facilities everywhere. They all seem to have some odour associated with them. Over there this doesn’t seem to be as big of deal as here.”

Entrepreneurship is recognizing opportunities where others don’t see them and then developing them into marketable and profitable outcomes. All Treat’s evolution is really a manifestation of this trait. The environmental benefit, although real, is ancillary. This typifies those that have made the composting industry grow the most. ♻️

*Paul van der Werf is president of 2cg Inc. in London, Ontario.
Contact Paul at [ww.2cg.ca](http://www.2cg.ca)*

Operational software that makes financials easy.

TRUX Haul•IT™
Route Management Software

TRUX Weigh•IT™
Facility Management Software

www.TRUX.com
ROUTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS INC.
Our Best Technology Goes To Waste

Since 1990

For a free demo call:
1-866-879-8789
Cambridge • Ontario

WORKING TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT SPECIALISTS IN WASTE BATTERY RECYCLING

Close the Loop on Battery Waste

Recycled over 8 Million lbs. of Batteries!!

As a licensed transporter of hazardous wastes, we collect and process batteries of all types and sizes. Call the Battery Broker to find out how you can divert your used batteries from landfill.

Eliminating long term land fill Liabilities
Recyclers of:
Nickel Cadmium, Lithium, Mercury, Zinc Carbon, Alkaline, Silver, Lead Acid, & All other Batteries

THE BATTERY BROKER ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES INC.

Ministry of Environment Approved
C of A A841207 C of A A210646

11 Tupper Avenue, Etobicoke, Ontario M8Z 5H5
Tel: (416) 255-3321 Fax: (416) 255-7707
Email: administration@batterybroker.on.ca

Website: <http://batterybroker.on.ca>

HMI Management Solutions

2460 Concession 6, Greenwood, ON L0H 1H0 Tel: 416-388-1133 email: bobmarshall@rogers.com

CONSULTANT

- ⇒ Operations
- ⇒ Strategic Planning
- ⇒ Procurement
- ⇒ Project Management
- ⇒ RFP & Bid Evaluations
- ⇒ Cost Control
- ⇒ Maintenance Programs
- ⇒ Design & Layout

Helping Manage Industry

Environmental Business Consultants

Expert Assistance to Environmental Companies

Technical Assistance

Mergers & Acquisitions

Financing & Investor Relations

Government Relations

Strategic growth and market development

John Nicholson, President
647-836-4064
www.ebccanada.com

recycling Equipment Company of Canada Inc.

**Balers • Baler Wire • L & P Wire Tie Systems
Shredders • Crushers • Magnetic Separators**

GARY BARLOW

100 Frobisher Drive, Unit #2
Waterloo, Ontario N2V 2A1

Phone 519-746-0990
Fax 519-746-8122