Biosolids
Questions & Answers

Information taken directly from the EPA website, www.water.epa.gov, 03/11/2013

What are Biosolids? They are nutrient-rich organic materials resulting from the treatment of domestic sewage in a treatment facility. When treated and processed, these residuals can be recycled and applied as fertilizer to improve and maintain productive soils and stimulate plant growth.

How are biosolids generated and processed? Biosolids are created through the treatment of domestic wastewater generated from sewage treatment facilities… The sewage goes through physical, chemical and biological processes which clean the wastewater and remove the solids.

How are biosolids used? After treatment and processing, biosolids can be recycled and applied as fertilizer to improve and maintain productive soils and stimulate plant growth. The controlled land application of biosolids completes a natural cycle in the environment. By treating sewage sludge, it becomes biosolids which can be used as valuable fertilizer, instead of taking up space in a landfill or other disposal facility.

Where are biosolids used? Farmers and gardeners have been recycling biosolids for ages. Biosolids recycling is the process of beneficially using treated residuals from wastewater treatment to promote the growth of agricultural crops, fertilize gardens and parks.

Are biosolids safe? The National Academy of Sciences has reviewed current practices, public health concerns and regulator standards, and has concluded that "the use of these materials in the production of crops for human consumption when practiced in accordance with existing federal guidelines and regulations, presents negligible risk to the consumer, to crop production and to the environment."

How are biosolids used for agriculture? Biosolids are used to fertilize fields for raising crops… Nutrients found in biosolids, such as nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium and trace elements such as calcium, copper, iron, magnesium, manganese, sulfur and zinc, are necessary for crop production and growth. The use of biosolids reduces the farmer's production costs and replenishes the organic matter that has been depleted over time. The organic matter improves soil structure by increasing the soil's ability to absorb and store moisture. The organic nitrogen and phosphorous found in biosolids are used very efficiently by crops because these plant nutrients are released slowly throughout the growing season.

Can biosolids be used for composting? Yes, biosolids may be composted and sold or distributed for use on lawns and home gardens. Most biosolids composts, are highly desirable products that are easy to store, transport and use.

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