

# Composting Cannabis Waste Material

Like all agricultural crops, cannabis cultivation creates waste material including but not limited to stems, roots and other plant material unsuitable for the commercial market. The handling of cannabis waste is subject to rules & regulations established by the Washington Liquor & Cannabis Board (LCB). Sustainable waste handling procedures need to be established and promoted by LCB and the cannabis industry.

The worst case scenario has producers and processors disposing of cannabis waste like trash, instead of handling it on-site in an environmentally sound manner. The problem stems from identifying this material as “waste”. It’s not trash but a potential resource when handled properly.

The responsible alternative is to look at cannabis waste as an underutilized commodity. Composting this material not only addresses the obvious problem of what to do with it but creates an opportunity to recycle it into useable and valuable soil. Cannabis farmers are the only ones I know that buy new soil for every crop. IMHO the first thing any farmer should grow is soil. Good farmers recognize the difference between dirt and soil. The former is dead, the latter is alive.

Cannabis farmers often speak of *probiotic soil*. This is soil that includes soil based organisms; beneficial bacteria and fungi that create a symbiotic relationship with plants through root contact. Living soil creates a biome that helps grow healthier plants. Composting is the perfect way to create a healthy biome.

Cannabis waste can be composted in ways that result in excellent probiotic soil. Methods include *bokashi*, a Japanese anaerobic technique, incorporating mushroom waste to grow mycelium and the introduction of red wiggler worms (vermiculture). Such a workflow recycles waste into nutrients, saving producers money. Composting has the side benefit of sequestering carbon as well.

While LCB can’t dictate how farmers handle cannabis waste by providing legal ways to compost onsite and educating farmers about sustainable composting techniques, the waste is kept out of trash and recycling facilities and producers are assured of being compliant with relevant rules & regulations.

I have developed bokashi-inspired inoculants grown on spent coffee grounds. While my workflow has not focused on cannabis waste specifically, with LCB’s blessing I would gladly take this on as a project and share it with the 502 community.

Jerry Whiting

LeBlancCNE@gmail.com