

ground on the ReVenture biomass project by the end of the year in order to qualify for \$60 million in tax credits.

The ink isn't dry on the deal with the county either. "What passed was an amendment including the option to do what ReVenture is proposing," says Cary Saul, director of land use and environmental services for Mecklenburg County. The proposed cost for ReVenture taking in up to 50,000 tons of yard waste is \$50,000. "That's \$1 a ton — we couldn't pass that up," he says. The fact that debugging was not a requirement made the deal additionally attractive, he adds. "They're talking about being ready to receive yard waste by July 2011," but they don't yet have the facility permit. The proposal also calls for ReVenture to begin taking the county's municipal solid waste for \$25 a ton once a contract with the local landfill expires June 30, 2012, a deal the *Journal* reports could be worth \$10 million annually. Saul said the plan to build what the company is terming a "fuel preparation facility" is basically a dirty MRF that would generate energy by incinerating trash, wood and sewage sludge.

### Wheaton, Illinois TOPDRESSING WITH COMPOST

Desire of homeowners to avoid the multiple deleterious effects of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers by turning toward more natural means of keeping their lawns green and healthy includes using compost, says Keith Schuler, who has seen his Wheaton, Illinois-based organic residential lawn maintenance service, LawnStylist, grow steadily over the past 12 years. "It's bigger on the coasts but it's slowly growing here in the Midwest," he says. "It's coming. People are more open to trying more natural methods — particularly those that yield results."



Schuler always includes a topdressing of compost with his lawn service, anywhere from one-quarter to one-eighth inch annually. "I overseed at the same time if I can sell the client on it because compost is a great medium for overseeding," he says. His tool of choice for compost application is the Ecolawn Top Dresser, which he finds both faster and more efficient than other models he has used. When spreading compost, "the dri-

er it is the better," he adds, along with having a C:N ratio of at least 10:1. "Twelve to one is even better," Shuler says. "The one I apply is 16-to-1 manure-based compost." But even more critical than providing fertility is giving the soil microbiology a boost. "You're adding biology when you're putting compost down," he says, "and your applying nutrients at a proper ratio."

### Enosburg Falls, Vermont FARM COMPOSTER RECEIVES ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

Diamond Hill Custom Heifers Farm in Enosburg Falls, featured in the August 2006 edition of *BioCycle* in an article entitled "Extracting Thermal Energy From Composting," has been honored with Vermont's "Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence & Pollution Prevention." A letter to the farm's owner, Terry Magnan, from Jonathan L. Wood, secretary of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, stated in part: "Your award-winning project stands out as a model that should inspire all Vermonters to find innovative approaches to conserve natural resources, safeguard human and environmental health and prevent pollution before it is generated."

Due to the start of a busy farming season, Magnan missed the May 3 awards ceremony. "We got started real small and had the idea of throwing some black pipe in the manure pile and getting some heat out of it," he says of the on-farm thermal energy project. "It was a stepping-stone process." He credits Brian Jeruse, a partner in WASTE NOT Resource Solutions, for both nominating Magnan for the award and for writing the grant proposals that leveraged state and federal funding for the renewable energy project in the first place. "It's a very efficient, low input system," Jeruse says, requiring very low energy to operate (the whole system operates on 0.25 HP). "It draws hot vapors through existing composting manure piles. The hot vapors heat the water up to 140°F and at the same time you're aerating piles." Magnan likes his system because it's a simple and symbiotic closed-loop: The livestock provide the manure for heating the water, and the hot water produced keeps the farm operation running clean. "It's a complete cycle," he says. "One enterprise is helping out the other. It's not very complicated — it's all just good common sense."

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