

## **Tips for Your Trash Free Party for 10,000**

(Compiled by Deb Habib, based on the North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival practices)

**Transition to Trash-Free:** If your event does not yet even recycle, start with this, and then add on a composting program in the subsequent year. You can also start by having vendors go ‘polystyrene-free’ then add the requirement to use compostable utensils the following year. It is easier to have a trash-free festival as core to your event values and planning from the start but if you are transitioning, consider doing it in stages, and keep vendors informed about the trash phase-out plan so they feel engaged. Humor always helps too!

**Clearly and enthusiastically explain your policy** in any initial application information that is sent to food (and other) vendors. For example, this is excerpted from the North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival application for food vendors:

*Our Festival Trash Free Policy: Once again, we only produced 3 bags of trash last year, with 120 bags of compostable material transformed into garden soil! This would not be possible without the support of our amazing food vendors. Thank you! Consider the no-trash policy very carefully before applying. No Styrofoam/polystyrene or plastic plates/cups or wrapped up plastic stuff. Paper plates and cups, preferably white and uncoated are great as they can be easily composted. Aluminum foil, free of food waste, can be recycled. Plan and order well in advance. The organizers are happy to run through your menu with you, and help you brainstorm products or serving ideas.*

**Enlist committed volunteers** to oversee receptacles or stations and to educate. No matter how informative your signs, human presence will increase effective sorting and reduce contamination. Provide them with gloves and a tool to retrieve things placed in the wrong receptacle (EZ Reach is one brand). Reducing contamination is critical if your compost is going to a commercial farm or composting facility and you want to sustain this relationship. College environmental groups can be great to enlist as volunteers, and good leadership for them. Keep volunteer shifts reasonable, and honor your volunteers with a meal, t-shirt, entry pass, or special thank you note. Some events have attendees put everything in one container, then volunteers sort everything off-site, but then much of the educational opportunity and sense of waste diversion ownership is lost, plus it is a little gross.

**Pre-Arrange with a farm, municipality, or composting company** to pick up and/or receive those bags of glorious compost. Do the math. It may cost you less to pay them for their service than pay for trash disposal. It is true that some costs—such as compostable bags will be higher than plastic. It may be helpful to seek a small grant or business sponsorship to cover such costs. They will likely still need to do a little sorting for ‘trash’ contaminants but hopefully not much!

**Create fun, bold receptacles** for compost and recyclables, or if you have the funds, order them from commercial suppliers or check with your local or state recycling or solid waste district, as some provide loaners to community events. Simple signage, and smaller holes that fit the types of items to be disposed of will help participants pause before dumping. Be aware of weight of the containers to ease set up and emptying.

**Make entry and field signs, and/or engaging exhibits** celebrating successes such as how much attendees and vendors have helped save from landfills and how much compost for gardens has been made. **Encourage healthy competition** through trash-free games or prizes at the event.