

## The Many Benefits of Composting:

- Reducing methane emissions that contribute to climate change
- Sequestering/storing carbon
- Improving biodiversity and soil, water, and air health
- Reducing water consumption for all soil types
- Conserving water during drought and flood events
- Decreasing soil erosion and stormwater runoff
- Decreasing reliance on chemical fertilizers and pesticides
- Increasing landfill diversion
- Creating green jobs and infrastructure

Once you're ready to dispose of your pumpkins, you have lots of options. Find one or more that are a good fit for you and your family.

**ANYTIME:** Find an out-of-the-way spot in your yard. A sunny spot speeds the process but is not required. Put one pumpkin in the sun and one in the shade and compare notes. Place your pumpkin in the spot, smash it a bit, cover it with an equal or greater amount of leaves, and let nature do its work.

**ANYTIME:** Use your community's regular curbside, container swap, drop-off, or other organics/food scrap collection program.

**ANNUALLY AROUND HALLOWEEN:** Look for local community collection events and Pumpkin Smashes.




## A Smashed Pumpkin is Better Than a Rotted One

Pumpkin collection events, or “Smashes,” are spreading throughout Chicagoland! Learn why, where, when, and how to compost your pumpkins rather than send them to landfill.

You may know watermelons are mostly water (it's in the name!). Did you also know pumpkins are mostly water (it's why they are so heavy!)? And did you know that when it comes to pumpkin production, Illinois “smashes” the competition? Leading in acreage and yield, Illinois produced 564 million pounds of ornamental (for decorating) and processing (for eating) pumpkins in 2020—as much as the other top five most productive states (CA, IN, MI, TX, and VA) combined.

Did you also know that one-third of all food produced globally is lost (does not reach consumers) or wasted (is not eaten by consumers after purchase)? Food and organic waste in anaerobic landfills cannot break down properly and produce methane gas, which is 30 – 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere. If food waste were a country, it would be the third largest emitter of greenhouse gasses behind China and the United States.

Reducing food and other organic waste sent to landfills—and specifically composting that food and organic waste instead—are easy and inexpensive ways to reduce and reverse methane emissions, capture and store carbon, and enrich soil, water, and air quality. Composting pumpkins and other water-intensive organics not only conserves water already in soil, it rescues and returns water to soil that had previously been removed. #rescuewater

- Before composting or smashing any pumpkins, please note—only the pumpkins themselves may be composted.
- Do not use or be sure to remove any non-biodegradable decorating materials such as plastic, metal, stickers, candles, etc. 

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