Problem Being Solved

In 2014, the Minnesota Composting Council (MNCC) wanted to establish a unique, educational program that would increase awareness about the benefits of composting by getting the community involved. This led to the development of the Plate to Garden (PTG) program which completes the loop on growing food, eating food, and turning food scraps back into soil to grow food again.

The collaboration with local compost facilities are what makes these events possible. The MNCC helps to coordinate the delivery of certified compost from the facility to the host site where the event takes place. The Plate to Garden events provide the opportunity for groups including schools, community organizations and more to raise money while educating the community about the benefits of composting and using finished compost.

Planning Timeframe

Planning a Plate to Garden event requires about 6 weeks to ensure enough time to mobilize volunteers and advertise for the event. The Minnesota Composting Council has a designated person to work with the civic groups to coordinate the event and ensure timely drop off the bags which are purchased by the group. The MNCC also provides the groups with the necessary supplies such as gloves, shovels, signage, and vests, while the civic groups must rally volunteers to bag the compost and provide a host site where the event is held. The civic group sets their own price for each bag of compost so that the proceeds can cover the cost of the bags and the compost delivery fee. Any money left over goes to the group.

Resources Needed

- Volunteers
- Site

Provided by MNCC

- Bags: $.50/bag (bags hold 20 lbs.)
- Gloves
- Signs
- Banners
- Compost: this is donated by the MNCC’s member composters and delivered on the day of the event.

Note: The only charges to the organization holding the event are the cost for the delivery of the compost and the cost of the bags.
**The Minnesota Composting Council**

**Plate to Garden**

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**Story**

MNCC leaders sought to develop a fundraiser that would benefit the chapter, it’s members and the partners involved in the project. The inspiration came from working with elementary schools that wanted to establish a unique fundraiser so the students could see what happens to the food they throw into the organics bin at school. The MNCC decided that Plate to Garden events could benefit everyone involved and launched the program in 2015. Since then, the Plate to Garden program has become very successful and has grown to about ten to fifteen events each year. A typical PTG event lasts about 4-5 hours where 500 bags of compost are sold and groups have earned up to $1,500 after expenses were paid.

The MNCC has an educational table(s) at both the PTG and PGT/International Compost Awareness Week (ICAW) events. The event is an opportunity to provide education to the public about compostable products, non-compostable products and, of course, the MNCC.

The MNCC has also held more high-profile events in recent years. In 2019 and 2021, a Plate to Garden event was held at CHS stadium, the home field of minor league baseball team, the St. Paul Saints. In addition, an ICAW event was held at a popular local brewery, the Urban Growler, in 2019 and 2021. Both organizations use all compostable serviceware to serve food and beverages.

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**Successes**

Successful advertising of the event has resulted in selling out of compost every time! The success of these events has led to some groups having a PTG events every year.

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**Challenges**

Like any event, there have been challenges to overcome. There were complaints about using plastic bags. The MNCC aims to host events that are as sustainable as possible. They reevaluated the use of plastic bags and have been seeking alternative options such as burlap bags or having the events being BYOB (Bring Your Own Bag). Different challenges arise from both options: burlap bags are more costly and BYOB means missing out on a marketing opportunity for the MNCC by not having a printed logo on the bags.

The MNCC has solved the issue and is excited to provide burlap bags to groups starting this Spring 2022. A postcard with marketing and education information will be attached to each bag. Also being offered is the option of picking up compost in their own container.

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**Links for additional information:**

PTG Events: [http://www.mncompostingcouncil.org/plate-to-garden.html?fbclid=IwAR3c7NWhSdf1Vts2vtGEEeUSJxTvnlPspj88k9pwmCS-GEi3ekATxvw](http://www.mncompostingcouncil.org/plate-to-garden.html?fbclid=IwAR3c7NWhSdf1Vts2vtGEEeUSJxTvnlPspj88k9pwmCS-GEi3ekATxvw)

Urban Growler Event

Boston Scientific Maple Grove Event