



# Windy City

## Biosolids/Compost

Spring 2022

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### Five Ways to Wow with Biosolids in 2022

Now is a great time to plan for spring and summer projects. Why not plan to include cost saving and soil health improving EQ Biosolids in your projects? The best way to use these regenerative soil amendments is to tailor to the goals for your site. Try one of these five popular uses of EQ biosolids soil amendments this year.



There are many benefits from the use of EQ Biosolids. The District provided Midlothian with EQ Biosolids for the enrichment of their baseball fields. As the picture to the left shows, dogs love to frolic in the lush, grassy fields. So do their humans!

**1. Add Shade** - Does your park or yard need a relaxing area out of the sun for enjoying summer days? You can use EQ Biosolids, either air-dried biosolids or EQ Compost to improve the root zone for trees and shrubs at planting. EQ Compost will add organic matter and essential nutrients, as well as help the water-holding capacity of soil during those hot summer days.



*Trees established in EQ Compost at Maggie Daley Park in downtown Chicago provide shade and beauty.*

**2. Restore your green space** - Many of us deal with thinning damaged grass on compacted soils in various parts of athletic fields, picnic areas, or back yards. Using a thin layer of EQ Biosolids (about ¼") can revitalize these damaged areas. The added organic matter helps reduce compaction and feeds that hungry grass. For added benefit, try topdressing along with aerating those highly compacted areas.



*A driving range established with EQ Biosolids for The Longest Drive Competition at Cog Hill Golf and Country Club. The surface was previously clay soil with little organic matter. EQ Biosolids provided the support needed by the turfgrass to be a lush green range.*

*Continued on next page.*



## Five Ways to Wow with Biosolids in 2022, *continued*

**3. Improve water management** - Managing an area that is perpetually puddled during and after rain events can be frustrating. Is water running off your impermeable surfaces and making your play areas too soggy to use? Install a rain garden or bioswale to direct runoff to a specific area designed to hold water during rain events and reduce flooding elsewhere. We recommend a mix of EQ compost and sand to improve drainage. Adding plants that thrive in both wet and dry conditions will make this a vibrant garden-area.



*A bioswale created through a partnership with MWRD stormwater engineering to alleviate flooding in this park.*



*Pollinator friendly plants create a beautiful habitat next to a school yard that was transformed through the Space to Grow program.*

**5. Cover up eyesores** - Improve the aesthetics of unattractive areas using EQ Compost. Bins, outdoor boxes, and other man-made necessities can be eyesores in an otherwise peaceful garden or park. Mowing around these objects is a challenge and can lead to added maintenance with hand-held tools. Why not create a wildflower garden around the object? This can result in easier mowing, attractive flowers, and a screen to hide the eyesore from view. Using EQ Compost as a soil amendment during establishment and mulch each winter can help create a thriving low-maintenance garden.



*A flower garden grown in EQ Compost helps hide compost bins from view in a suburban backyard.*

## Time for Indoor Seed Starting

For all those homeowners and park managers who start seeds indoors for spring planting, try using EQ Compost for fast, effective germination and growth. EQ Compost is routinely tested for germination and maintains an impressive 95-100% germination rate. To start seeds, follow the instructions below.

1. Read the planting information on your seeds to determine when indoor seeding should begin. For many plants it is approximately 6-8 weeks after the last frost, which is May 15 in the Chicago area.
2. Prepare containers for your seeds. You can use a variety of containers such as plastic seeding 6-packs, soil blocks, or egg cartons.

*Continued on page 4.*



**Jeff Weiss****Buffalo Grove Environmental Action Team**

**MWRD:** Jeff, you helped lead the Buffalo Grove Park District in establishing a new arboretum, can you tell me about this project?

**Jeff:** The Buffalo Grove Park District created an arboretum at Green Lake Park. We added about 50 new woody species to the park in addition to what was already growing there, including 35 native shrub species and 15 tree species.

**MWRD:** How did you use EQ Compost or biosolids for this project?

**Jeff:** EQ Compost was used to prepare beds for groupings of plants and individual planting areas of trees. This included laying EQ Compost to raise the planting bed, and incorporating EQ Compost into planting areas for access by roots.

**MWRD:** Who contributed to this major project?

**Jeff:** The project was led by the Buffalo Grove Environmental Action Team. We received grants from ComEd's Green Region program, the Buffalo Grove Rotary and Garden Clubs and Lake County Stormwater Management Commission. Plant installation was a combination of staff work by Buffalo Grove Park District and volunteers. We sponsored planting events in May with about 50 volunteers and September with 40 volunteers from the community and three area clubs.



Jeff Weiss

Jeff Weiss is the coordinator for the Flint Creek/Spring Creek Watersheds Partnership, steward and leader of the Buffalo Grove Prairie Guardians and the Buffalo Grove Environmental Action Team. He has been a horticulture instructor at the College of Lake County and teaches classes at the Morton Arboretum. He is a long-time environmental advocate, leader, and volunteer in his community.

**MWRD:** What a great way to include the community in this project. What are the goals for the arboretum?

**Jeff:** We received ArbNet Level 1 Arboretum certification. Tags will be installed for each specimen that include QR codes to get more information from the Illinois Wildflowers website, including pollinator associations and growing conditions. We hope visitors will be inspired to use these plants in their home landscape. This spring we plan to add more trees and shrubs. We are planning a dedication and ongoing education at the arboretum.

**MWRD:** Have you used EQ Compost or EQ Biosolids in other projects?

**Jeff:** The arboretum is one of 5 projects undertaken in 2021 at Green Lake Park. Buffalo Grove Park District used air-dried biosolids at this park in gravelly soil on the grass around a new cricket pitch. EQ compost was used in redeveloping and replanting the butterfly garden and other garden beds and planting areas within the park. EQ compost was also used in aquatic planters for shallow water habitat and foliage in Green Lake through a project by the Boy Scouts. We will continue to use EQ Compost for plantings and maintenance at our parks. There is a lot more work to do!

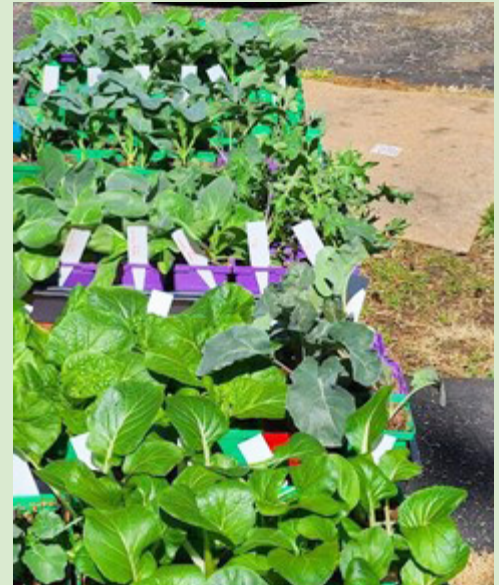


*(Left) Jeff Weiss and staff from Buffalo Grove Park District work together to place an aquatic planter full of EQ Compost in Green Lake. The planter will support aquatic plants, which will provide aquatic habitat and help reduce erosion on the shores of Green Lake.*

*(Photo credit, Jeff Weiss)*

*Community volunteers work to improve habitat and ecosystem services at Green Lake in Buffalo Grove. (Photo credit, Jeff Weiss)*

## Time for Indoor Seed Starting, *continued*



*Seeds planted in a soil mix including 50% EQ compost germinated indoors and grow prior to transplanting in a garden.*

3. Create a soil mix of 50% EQ Compost, 30% sterile seed starting mix, and 20% vermiculite. Slowly add water and mix the materials so that they are moist but not water-logged.
4. Fill your containers with the mix.
5. Add seeds at recommended planting depths and keep moist but not water-logged.

Tips: Germination does not require fertilization. Allow the seedlings to receive nutrients from the soil mix so you do not cause fertilization damage to your new plants. If your seedlings get long and stringy, they are likely too far from the light source. Try to have the light source within a couple of inches of the plants. If you have wilted stems but have kept them well watered, you may need to back off on the amount of water you are providing. Have fun!

## EQ Compost and EQ Biosolids available soon!



The 2022 Biosolids Season is around the corner!

The MWRD's EQ Compost is a sustainable and environmentally beneficial product derived from the water reclamation process that blends biosolids with woodchips to create a product rich in organic matter to improve the structure and porosity of soils.

EQ Compost will be available starting May 2, 2022. Please check the website for updates. [www.mwrd.org/eq-compost](http://www.mwrd.org/eq-compost)

We are taking advanced orders for EQ air-dried biosolids. Click the EQ at <https://mwrd.org/biosolids> to place your order.

Please direct any questions to [biosolids@mwrd.org](mailto:biosolids@mwrd.org).

For more information on the use of EQ biosolids or to include them in your projects, please visit our website at [mwrd.org/biosolids](http://mwrd.org/biosolids) or contact:

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