

# How to Host a Pumpkin Collection



**PUMPKIN SMASH**  
**GREEN YOUR HALLOWEEN**

This guide is provided for free on  
[www.scarce.org/pumpkins](http://www.scarce.org/pumpkins)



## Introduction

Thank you for your interest in bringing the annual Pumpkin Smash to your community. The Pumpkin Smash is an annual waste reduction and education effort by communities in Illinois first begun by SCARCE in 2014. It diverts pumpkins from landfills by providing locations for residents to drop them off for composting. It is held each year the Saturday after Halloween. Don't Trash it, Smash it!

## **Why Compost?**

Composting is nature's way of recycling organic materials. It is a process that allows organic matter to decompose and form compost—a nutrient-rich soil amendment (said more plainly, a fabulous natural fertilizer). Composting organic materials provides many environmental benefits including: (1) reduces waste sent to landfills, (2) reduces greenhouse gas emissions, (3) reduces the amount of water in landfills, where it must be monitored to avoid groundwater contamination.

## **Green Your Halloween**

Many communities in the country are looking to expand their recycling programs by adding curbside composting to their waste hauling contracts. The Pumpkin Smash is a fun way to introduce residents to composting through a community-wide event. It's also an opportunity to teach residents to remove non-biodegradable materials (such as candles, plastic stickers and yarn) to avoid contaminating organic materials collected for composting.

Use this guide to host your own Pumpkin Smash and help your fellow community members green their Halloween!

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## **About SCARCE:**

SCARCE is an environmental education non-profit based in Illinois. We teach people to care for the earth's natural resources and build sustainable communities through hands-on learning and community environmental initiatives. Learn more at [www.scarce.org](http://www.scarce.org).



[www.scarce.org](http://www.scarce.org)

phone 630.545.9710

[info@scarce.org](mailto:info@scarce.org)



## How to Host a Pumpkin Collection

This guide was created to help anyone in Illinois organize and hold a 1-day pumpkin collection event the Saturday after Halloween to collect pumpkins from residents for composting. This guide includes:

- Event Coordination Details
- Pumpkin Factsheet
- State of Illinois Conditions for One-Day Compost Collection Events

### Event Coordination Summary

Details on each step are provided on the next page.

1. Determine a visible location with good entrance and exit paths that has space for a 20-yard roll-off container.
2. Obtain written approval from city (or county if unincorporated) for the event. No permit is required for this event.
3. Submit the approval to your county's recycling coordinator **30 days in advance** of the event.
4. Work with a local waste hauler to arrange composting for your event. There may be a fee associated with this service.
5. Let SCARCE know of your participation so that we can help promote the event! Visit [www.scarce.org/pumpkins](http://www.scarce.org/pumpkins) to register your site with us and get added to the statewide Pumpkin Smash map.
6. Promote your Pumpkin Smash! Use the customizable Pumpkin Smash fliers on [scarce.org/pumpkins](http://scarce.org/pumpkins) or create your own.
7. Recruit volunteers—a great opportunity to involve local youth.
8. After event: Follow-up with hauler to get total weight of composted pumpkins and update SCARCE, your volunteers, and local news outlets.

Contact SCARCE at [info@scarce.org](mailto:info@scarce.org) or 630-545-9710 with any questions.

### Outside of Illinois?

You can find information on state compost regulations and regulatory agencies on the U.S. Composting Council's website at [www.compostingcouncil.org/page/StateRegulations](http://www.compostingcouncil.org/page/StateRegulations). You may find that there are no official policies addressing one-day organics collection events (as we originally did here in Illinois). In those cases, we encourage you to work with your local municipal government to get a simple approval similarly as outlined in this guide.

### **Approval Letter & Notification Details**

A permit is not required, however, all hosts must obtain a written letter or email from their city (or county if event location is unincorporated) per Illinois law\*\*. Contact your municipality and explain what you are doing and that you need a simple email or letter from an official. We suggest reaching out to the clerk, community relations, or special events department.

The approval It must include:

- ✓ the date of the event
- ✓ location
- ✓ time
- ✓ list the types of compostable waste being collected (“pumpkins”, in this case).

**A copy of the approval must be sent to the county recycling coordinator 30 days prior** to the event if it is to be held in a county with a population greater than 400,000 and less than 2,000,000.

*\*\*Be sure to review the included State of Illinois conditions for one-day compost collection events to make sure your event complies*

### **Hauler & Collection Bin**

Arrange with a local waste hauler to have your pumpkins composted. Start with the hauler used by your location (e.g. if at a school, check with their contracted waste hauler) or with the hauler that provides waste services for your town.

There may be a fee associated with this service. If the Pumpkin Smash is hosted by a municipality, the service may be included as a special collection event as part of their service contract.

Request a 20-yard roll-off container and a tarp. Depending on how large your event is, you may want a second roll-off, however, most locations have found one to be enough. Arrange for drop off on Friday and pick up on Monday. Pumpkins must be picked up by the end of the next business day per state law.

The hauler must provide the location where the pumpkins will be taken for composting and the weight of pumpkins collected. Be sure to follow up with them for these details.

Your hauler should coordinate where to take the pumpkins. A list of licensed compost facilities can be found [here](#) on the Illinois EPA website or by googling “IL EPA Compost Facilities”.

### **Promotion**

Register your site with SCARCE to be included on the Pumpkin Smash map at [www.scarce.org/pumpkins](http://www.scarce.org/pumpkins). This map is searchable so that residents may easily find a convenient location.

There are free, customizable fliers, trick-or-treat cards, and a poster available for download from [www.scarce.org/pumpkins](http://www.scarce.org/pumpkins). *Encourage people to hand them out with their treats on Halloween.*

Promote in your city and school newsletters, on the city website, at the library, local park district facilities, grocery stores, pumpkin patches—anywhere you can! If a local business or city has a scrolling outdoor message board, try to get it on there.

**Don't forget: Make large signs for the event to direct cars to your location.**

## Social Media

When posting on social media, share it with us! You can find us on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter @scarce.eco.ed. Tag your post with #pumpkinsmash.

## COVID-19 Health & Safety Considerations

Be sure to follow local health & safety guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We strongly suggest organizers, volunteers, and attendees wear face coverings and practice proper social distancing. It is each host's responsibility to determine what guidelines to follow and enforce them at their individual site. We encourage hosts to stay aware of the local public health situation. It is up to site hosts to assess whether or not to hold their individual event based on local conditions.

## Staffing & Volunteers

On the day of the event, make sure to have an adult present at all times and a few volunteers. Recruit volunteers from high school or college environmental clubs, honors societies, volunteer clubs, scout groups etc. It's a fun event where they get to smash pumpkins!

Tip: This event can be messy. Volunteers should wear closed-toe shoes and appropriate clothing. Volunteers may want to wear work gloves as well. Encourage everyone to bring a reusable water bottle—after all, we are trying to reduce waste!

## Day of the Event

### Supplies:

- ◇ Signs and materials to secure them
- ◇ Scissors
- ◇ Camera (take lots of photos!)
- ◇ Tally Sheet for cars and pumpkins
- ◇ scale if you plan to weigh each pumpkin
- ◇ Work gloves or rubber dish gloves
- ◇ Trash bin for contaminants (see list below)

Keep track of how many cars visit and how many pumpkins you collect at your site to share with us as well as local news outlets and volunteers.

### Educate

Remember the goal is to educate! When residents drop off pumpkins, explain the importance of composting and keeping it contaminant-free.

This means **NO:**

- X **Candles**
- X **yarn**
- X **stickers**
- X **googly eyes**
- X **plastic ears**
- X **Non-biodegradable materials**

**In other words, only the pumpkins themselves can be composted! No plastic or metal of any kind.**

Check for and remove any contaminants in/on the pumpkin. If delivered in a garbage bag, remove the pumpkin from the bag. Offer them the opportunity to smash their pumpkin (it's fun!). Promote reuse by returning usable decorations or candles to residents.

### *Painted pumpkins*

Some residents may bring painted pumpkins, especially blue (it's a way to designate their house as peanut free). Most of this will be acrylic paint and is fully compostable.

### **Clean-Up**

When the collection is over, the roll-off must be covered with a tarp which must be secured to the container. The roll-off must be picked up within 48 hours per the State of Illinois conditions.

### **Event Follow Up**

Follow up with your hauler to get the weight of pumpkins collected. Send photos from the event, your participant tally, and weight of pumpkins collected to SCARCE at [erin@scarce.org](mailto:erin@scarce.org).

SCARCE will conduct a final tally and quantify our collective environmental benefit in terms of greenhouse gas avoidance and water returned to the soil. We want to share your success and show how Illinois is a leader in composting! You can look for a post on [www.scarce.org/blog](http://www.scarce.org/blog) later in November with results and photos from events across the state.

If not already being covered by local news, write a short blurb about your event, including the numbers and send along with a few photos to your city or school newsletter staff.

### **Fun Ideas:**

**TAKE PICTURES! Email them to [bev@scarce.org](mailto:bev@scarce.org) & your city newsletter staff**

This event is a great opportunity to get creative and have fun. Make it your own!

- Play music from Smashing Pumpkins
- Included with this guide is a pumpkin factsheet—pick out a few fun facts to share
- Dress up! Encourage staff and volunteers to wear green, orange or even pumpkin costumes.
- Have pumpkin toss themed games. Put a bulls-eye at the back of the bin and try to hit it! Set up a pumpkin ring toss or pumpkin tic-tac toe, etc

**NOTICE TO PARTICIPANT:** You participate in this program at your own risk. Each participant assumes all responsibility and risk for any accidents, sickness, or other mishaps, including, but not limited to, serious bodily injury, permanent disability, and/or death, that may result. SCARCE and its representatives may not be held liable for any accidents, sickness, or other mishaps.

## Standard Conditions for One-Day Compostable Waste Collection Events

*This section of the Illinois Environmental Protection Act applies to anyone in Illinois that wishes to host a one-day Pumpkin Smash event. Please familiarize yourself with the details if you plan to host a site.*

415 Illinois Compiled Statutes 5/22.55, subsection d-5: One-day compostable waste collection events.

### **Approval Requirements**

To further aid in the collection and composting of compostable waste, as defined in subsection (b), a municipality may approve the operation of one-day compostable waste collection events at any site or facility within its territorial jurisdiction, and a county may approve the operation of one-day compostable waste collection events at any site or facility in any unincorporated area within its territorial jurisdiction.

The approval granted under this subsection (d-5) must:

- be in writing;
- specify the date, location, and time of the event;
- and list the types of compostable waste that will be collected at the event.

If the one-day compostable waste collection event is to be operated at a location within a county with a population of more than 400,000 but less than 2,000,000 inhabitants, according to the 2010 decennial census, then the operator of the event shall, at least 30 days before the event, provide a copy of the approval to the recycling coordinator designated by that county.

The approval granted under this subsection (d-5) may include conditions imposed by the county or municipality as necessary to protect public health and prevent odors, vectors, and other nuisances. A one-day compostable waste collection event approved under this subsection (d-5) must be operated in accordance with the approval, including all conditions contained in the approval. The following requirements shall apply to the one-day compostable waste collection event, in addition to the conditions contained in the approval:

### **Standard Conditions for One-Day Compostable Waste Collection Events**

- (1) Waste accepted at the event must be limited to the types of compostable waste authorized to be accepted under the approval.
- (2) Information promoting the event and signs at the event must clearly indicate the types of compostable waste approved for collection. To discourage the receipt of other waste, information promoting the event and signs at the event must also include:
  - (A) examples of compostable waste being collected; and
  - (B) examples of waste that is not being collected.
- (3) Compostable waste must be accepted only from private individuals. It may not be accepted from other persons, including, but not limited to, owners and operators of rented or leased residences where it was generated, commercial haulers, and other commercial, industrial, agricultural, and government operations or entities.
- (4) Compostable waste must be managed in a manner that protects against releases of the waste, prevents nuisances, and otherwise protects human health and the environment. Compostable waste must be properly secured to prevent it from being accessed by the public at any time, including, but not limited to, during the collection event's non-operating hours. One-day compostable waste collection events must be adequately supervised during their operating hours.

- (5) Compostable waste must be secured in non-porous, rigid, leak-proof containers that:
  - (A) are covered, except when the compostable waste is being added to or removed from the containers or it is otherwise necessary to access the compostable waste;
  - (B) prevent precipitation from draining through the compostable waste;
  - (C) prevent dispersion of the compostable waste by wind;
  - (D) contain spills or releases that could create nuisances or otherwise harm human health or the environment;
  - (E) limit access to the compostable waste by vectors;
  - (F) control odors and other nuisances; and
  - (G) provide for storage, removal, and off-site transfer of the compostable waste in a manner that protects its ability to be composted.
- (6) No more than a total of 40 cubic yards of compostable waste shall be located at the collection site at any one time.
- (7) Management of the compostable waste must be limited to the following:
  - (A) acceptance, (B) temporary storage before transfer, and (C) off-site transfer.
- (8) All compostable waste received at the event must be transferred off-site to a permitted compost facility by no later than 48 hours after the event ends or by the end of the first business day after the event ends, whichever is sooner.
- (9) If waste other than compostable waste is received at the event, then that waste must be disposed of within 48 hours after the event ends or by the end of the first business day after the event ends, whichever is sooner.

This information is also available online at the [EPA website](#).