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[Community Corner](#)

## Composting Pilot Program Launched At Vienna Farmers Market To Gauge Interest

While finding a location to launch composting in Vienna has been a challenge, a pilot program has started at the Vienna Farmers Market.



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Composting is being accepted through a pilot program at the Vienna Farmers Market for 14 weeks. (Jenna Fisher/Patch)

VIENNA, VA — As shoppers pick up their fruits, vegetables and other items at the Vienna Farmers Market, they can now drop off food scraps for composting.

A [composting pilot program](#) began last Saturday and runs for 14 weeks at the [farmers market](#), Christina Caplan, chair of Vienna's Conservation and Sustainability Commission, told Patch. The composting is available during farmers market hours from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Saturdays through Aug. 17. The Vienna Farmers Market is located in the Vienna Community Center parking lot (120 Cherry St SE).

"The Conservation and Sustainability Commission has been working for many, many years to get a composting program started in town, either a drop-off site or collection," said Caplan. "The farmers market may be a good place to start to gauge interest, then find a permanent site."

All types of food scraps, including meat bones, can be brought to the farmers market composting site. Non-food items like paper packaging, glass, metals and plastic bags as well as oils, fat and liquids cannot be composted. The composting is located on the outskirts of the farmers market so customers can drop off food scraps before entering.

The program, funded with the commission's own funds, is being managed by [Veteran Compost](#), a Maryland veteran-owned business. The service provides staffing at the farmers market, provides bins and picks up bins to take to their farm. Veteran Compost will also collect metrics on how many people bring compost and how much compost is collected.

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"They take the food waste to their farm, where they turn it into compost they then sell," said Caplan.

According to Caplan, one benefit of composting is the environmental impact of reducing waste and greenhouse gases by reducing trash pickup and trash incinerator use. Composting also creates a usable product for gardens and farms that add nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus and reduces water use in the soil.

"If you're going to pick up apples at the farmers market, it would be nice to be able to drop off your food waste for the week," said Caplan.

The commission and the Optimist Club of Greater Vienna — the Vienna Farmers Market operator — had received many questions about composting before introducing the pilot program. Efforts to bring a composting service to Vienna in the past have stalled, as a widespread service could prove costly to the town. The only options Town of Vienna residents have is to sign up and pay for a pickup service or compost in their backyard.

Caplan said a drop-off site would be less expensive than door-to-door pickup, but finding a location has been a challenge. She noted there was a composting site at the fire station years ago, but nearby residents were concerned about pests and other impacts.

Another site considered was Glyndon Park near the tennis courts, but there were also concerns about nearby homes as well as taking away a few parking spaces.

One of the better options would be the site where the purple bin for glass recycling is located (431 Mill Street NE), Caplan says. Although on-street traffic jams could be a challenge at this site, Caplan says it hasn't been ruled out for the future. Other sites, including parking lots offered by churches, could be considered as locations too.

If the pilot program shows people are interested in composting, the Conservation and Sustainability Commission could look for a way to fund a more permanent program.