

# AGENCY TEAMWORK CREATES COMPOST SUCCESS

*Composting programs have linked several Walla Walla Valley, Washington agencies in a collective effort to manage organic residuals.*

*Russ Davis*

**T**HE charming town of Walla Walla, Washington has earned quite a reputation over the last century or so. It was first known for its onions — the world famous Walla Walla Sweet. Then, it won a “Great American Main Street Award” from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Following that, it was selected by *Sunset Magazine* as its “Best Main Street in the West.” Walla Walla is now enjoying international acclaim as an area where some of the world’s best wines are produced. But why stop there?

Located in the southeastern corner of Washington State, Walla Walla County has a population of around 55,000 — half of whom live in the city of Walla Walla. Visitors to the area in spring and summer are often surprised by the number of trees in the city, which produce a substantial amount of leaves in the fall, according to Hal Thomas, Public Works Director. “We love the trees, but we needed to have a plan for the 1,600 or so tons of leaves we receive

in the fall. We had tried a yard waste only facility, but found that there was more we wanted to do.”

The city decided to coordinate its composting efforts with Walla Walla County and the Washington State Penitentiary. Sharon Johnson, Solid Waste Coordinator for the county, had been working for quite a while on a plan that could involve multiple agencies and knew that more could be done. “Our planning paid off, and we were able to secure funds from various sources — including the Washington Department of Ecology — to help us build a facility close to the prison.” The tip station, located adjacent to the penitentiary, accepts yard trimmings and leaves from landscapers, the city and its residents. The actual composting facility is on the prison grounds.

**Food residuals and yard trimmings are loaded into bioreactor vessels for three weeks, then put into aerated static piles adjacent to fans for curing.**



