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WKU receives \$283K grant for composting

By CAROLINE EGGERS ceggers@bgdailynews.com Jun 8, 2019



Birds fly over a composting pile April 2 at the WKU Farm.

Austin Anthony

The Kentucky Division of Waste Management awarded the Western Kentucky University Research Foundation a \$283,825 grant – the second-highest grant amount this year – to improve composting efforts.

“We were pretty lucky, we got a pretty big chunk,” said Joey Reynolds, the WKU agriculture technician who manages the compost program.

The grant will allow WKU to purchase a new “loader” truck capable of moving and turning compost piles, a new blacktop area on which to bake compost in the sun, more composting carts and improvements to the composting operations at the Baker Arboretum, according to Reynolds.

He hopes the grant will help boost composting, but more importantly make the composting supply more consistent.

“We’re excited about all of it. The blacktop is going to give us more room to get more product ready and processed,” Reynolds said.

Composting provides sundry benefits, such as diverting waste from the landfill, reducing landfill-related methane emissions and remediating soils contaminated by hazardous waste. The healthier soil helps reduce air pollution, enhances water retention, provides carbon sequestration, promotes higher agricultural crop yields and can aid with reforestation, wetlands restoration and habitat revitalization efforts, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

In 2014, WKU initiated food composting by collecting scraps from the Fresh Food Co. In late 2017, a Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet grant allowed the university to expand food collection to all 15 dining locations on campus – and to purchase a Roto-Screen, a giant machine that essentially filters the organic material from items such as forks, plates and cups.

In a single year, the program composted 300,000 pounds of food, and it seems to continue growing.

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The Kentucky Division of Waste Management annually awards grants for recycling, household hazardous waste and composting. This year, the division distributed about \$3.3 million to recycling efforts, \$824,000 to household hazardous waste and about \$500,000 to composting.

The WKU Research Foundation was awarded the second-highest grant total, after a nearly \$423,000 recycling grant to Pulaski Fiscal Court.

Also in Warren County, Warren Fiscal Court received a \$47,600 grant for household hazardous waste.

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