

*This report is produced by Forestry Tasmania for staff, forest workers and interested members of the community. It can be obtained via email or [www.southwoodresources.com.au](http://www.southwoodresources.com.au).*

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## **WASTE NOT, WANT NOT .... Huon Wood Centre Composting Trials**

*When the wood centre development commenced in September 2002, plans were outlined for converting sawdust and other organic site wastes to compost. With the construction of Neville Smith (Tas) sawmill and a ready supply of sawdust, trials have been established to address several questions.*

### **QUESTION:**

**Can we get growth benefits in forests from organic compost vs the more commonly used synthetic fertilisers such as urea?**

The Southern Forests especially, require fertilising. Dr Tim Wardlaw, Principal Research Officer for Forestry Tasmania headed up a project team including Michael Ince of Geeveston and Paul Adams as coordinator.

Compost heaps were started in November 2004 at the Huon wood centre site. The idea to assist local industries with their organic waste lead to sawdust from the sawmill being mixed with poultry manure and fish waste from local producers.

The compost was turned three to four times a week through to May 2005, with the assistance of Neville Smith (Tas). Although the optimum is a daily turning regime, one of the questions was whether or not there are additional mulching benefits to be gained from a partial fertiliser compost/mulch mix.

The mix was applied to Arve 70, planted out in autumn this year. This trial plot has five options being researched. They are: untreated sawdust as a mulch, the partial fertiliser compost/mulch produced at the wood centre, a bio-solid waste/sawdust compost, standard commercial compost and the standard nitrogen/phosphorous/urea fertiliser normally used in forest regeneration.

Tim Wardlaw says that the technology to produce fertilising compost is straightforward, but at \$50 a cubic metre to make, it costs little more to purchase.

“However, we are looking for more natural, environmentally acceptable fertilisers and a way to make productive use of wood waste,” he said.

The results will be monitored over time, the first seedlings being measured this winter, then annually at the end of each growing season.

“Biosolids such as treated sewerage from councils around Tasmania could be a source for the future. It is more acceptable for this material to be used on growing trees in forests away from habitation, than in food production closer to towns,” said Tim Wardlaw.

“We have had the assistance of Nugent farmer, Mr Noel White, who has had considerable experience with this. His agricultural equipment was used to spread the material. We have learned that machinery will have to be adjusted for use in forests.”

**Other questions being asked: - Milk and wood waste – organic rehabilitation?  
From sawdust to bricks – in Tasmania?**

**For more information visit the wood centre shop, 11 Main Rd, Huonville or phone Lyn Sullivan on 6264 2766**