

Finding Black Gold in Mount Manure: Composting Horse Manure *Part 2 of 4*

by Alayne Blickle
Program Director,
Horses for Clean Water



Alayne Renee Blickle, a life-long equestrian and reining competitor is the creator/director of Horses for Clean Water. HCW offers educational materials, courses and individual consultations on ways to care for and manage your horse and the facilities, with an emphasis on environmentally friendly techniques. For more info on HCW visit the website at HorsesforCleanWater.com



Build a composting system in just a weekend using these 4 simple steps

In the first part of this series we discussed the benefits of composting – as well as the problems associated with not having a manure management program on your property. This month we cover how to build and manage a horse manure composting system.

This simple design is meant for small properties with 1 to 5 horses. If you plan to use a tractor you will need a sturdier design and probably a cement pad. If you're interested in a sturdier or larger design, contact Horses for Clean Water on the Web at www.HorsesforCleanWater.com or one of the resources agencies listed in Part 4 of this series. Tailor your composting system to meet your needs depending on how many horses you have, the amount and type of bedding material you use, and how you plan to use the finished compost.

4 Steps to Building A Manure Composting System

1. Select a site for your composter.

Look for a high, level area on your property. Don't put your composter in a low-lying area or it will turn into a soggy mess. Remember you must locate your composter far away from creeks, ditches, wetlands or other water bodies. You can check with local authorities for specific regulations on this. Choose an area according to your zoning regulations to avoid zoning-related issues or problems with neighbors. Stay away from locating your compost system along property lines. A location that's convenient to your stall and paddock areas will make the chore of cleaning up easier and less time consuming.

2. Decide on the number of bins you'll need.

You will need at least two bins, and maybe a third for convenience. A two-bin system works by piling manure and stall wastes in one bin.

When that bin is full allow it to compost and start filling the second bin. Once the first bin is done composting you can start using the finished compost material. For convenience, or if you have several horses, you may want to consider going to three bins. This allows one bin for the daily stall wastes, another bin that is full and in the composting stage, and a third bin for the finished compost to be removed and used at your leisure.

3. Purchase materials.

A list of materials and equipment needed to build a three-bin system is included below. Materials cost about \$150 to \$350 per bin depending on the type of wood you use and their cost in your area. Treated wood will cost more but will last longer. Feel free to improvise and experiment by choosing materials available in your area that will work for you and your situation.

For three 4' x 8' x 8' bins joined side-by-side, the following supplies and equipment are needed:

SUPPLIES

8	8' x 6" x 6" treated posts
40	4' x 2" x 2" treated boards
110	8' landscape timbers (or other wood)
160	3" deck screws
Tarp or plastic sheet to cover top of each bin	

EQUIPMENT

Drill with screwdriver head & drill bit
25' tape measure
Chain saw or hand saw
Carpenter's level
Post hole digger
Tamping rod or similar tool

NOTE: The number of landscape timbers (or other wood) will depend on the type and width of the timbers you purchase and how tall you wish to make your bins.

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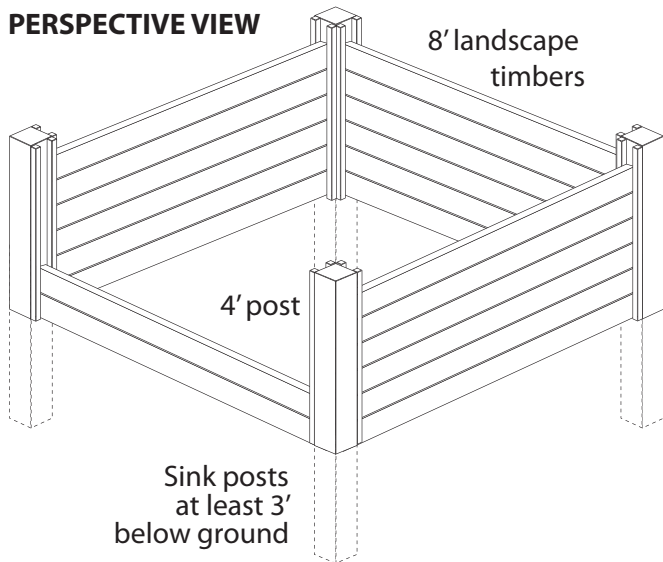
4. Build the bins.

Following the design below, you can build this compost bin system in a weekend. Based on the supplies listed, the three bins must be built side by side, sharing the four center posts. Dotted lines in the design represent portions of the posts that are underground.

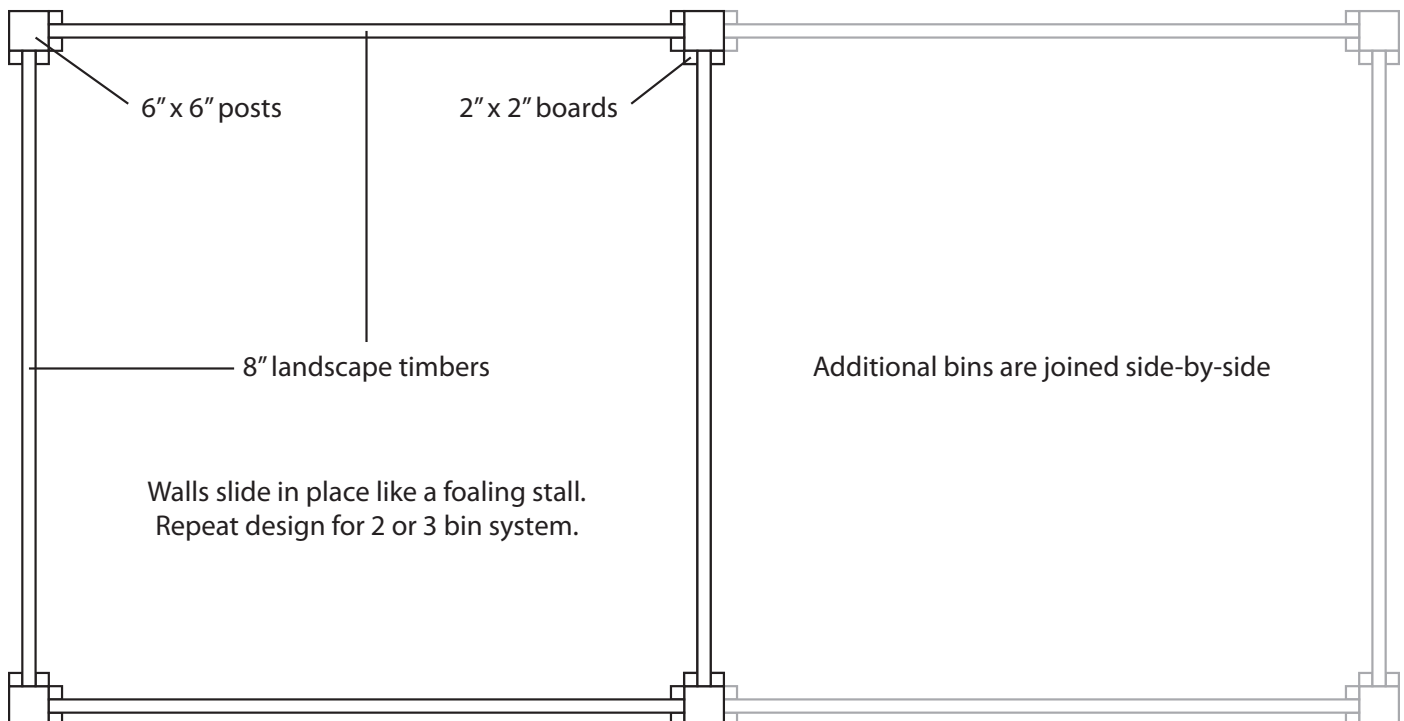
Stay tuned for the third part of this series when we discuss how to manage your compost system.

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PERSPECTIVE VIEW



TOP VIEW



Join Horses For Clean Water at the following events and visit www.HorsesforCleanWater.com for new events added regularly:

Snohomish Horse 4-Hers' Equine-A-Rama

Saturday, February 3

MONROE, WA

HCW will be part of the Equine-A-Rama at Evergreen State Fairgrounds in Monroe, WA. From 10:00 AM to 12:15 PM HCW will present a mud, manure & pasture workshop – great ways to get rid of mud on your horse property, manage manure and keep those pastures green. Registration not necessary but for more details contact Alayne@horsesforcleanwater.com or 425-432-6116.

Beyond Paradise Farm

Saturday, February 10

MONROE, WA

Join HCW from 10:00 AM to noon to tour this 4H family farm. View small acreage pastures managed to reduce mud and improve pasture productivity. Meet some friendly Shagya Arabians bred for their temperament as well as endurance riding. See wildlife-friendly ways to control unwanted bugs. FREE & open to anyone! For details or to register contact Alayne@horsesforcleanwater.com or 425-432-6116.