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Waste Not – Garden-Ville and Texas Disposal Systems

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[Texas Disposal Systems](#) (TDS) collects Georgetown's trash and recycling materials... and then through [Garden-Ville Stores](#), makes organic products available to Georgetown residents in the form of soil, mulch, fertilizer, and landscape bedding. Garden-Ville is the retail arm of TDS, a Central Texas company that's on the cutting edge of waste management. You read that right – the local trash collector has a retail outlet.

At the TDS facilities in Creedmoor, south of Austin, the emphasis is on diverting as much waste as possible away from the landfill. That's possible because through Garden-Ville, a scrap metal business, and various other ventures, TDS is able to redirect recyclables and help the environment at the same time.

"We see waste as a resource," says TDS manager Verna Browning. "For that to be the case, there must be a use and market for products made from recycled materials."

That was a groundbreaking shift in focus when, in 1990, TDS was the first solid waste management company in Texas to receive permits for a landfill, a recycling facility, and a composting operation at the same site and the same time. From the start, the company turned Central Texas organic waste into nutrient-rich compost. When they began to produce more than they could use themselves, they purchased Garden-Ville to be the outlet to move the organic products and make them available to the public.

How Garden-Ville and TDS Help Georgetown Businesses Save Money and Create Positive PR

When a new company comes to Georgetown, TDS participates with the City's Development Review Committee (DRC) and looks over the site plans during the permitting process. This gives TDS the opportunity to make suggestions regarding the company's construction plans and waste management plans. TDS can also offer companies suggestions which might save the company money.

"Many companies want to be green, and TDS can offer options for recycling which are as cheap or cheaper than discarding everything," says TDS Operations Manager Gary Hertel. "The majority of construction waste can be recycled: wood, metal, cardboard, concrete, soil."

Hertel cited the construction of the CitiCorp Data Center in Georgetown as a successful example, during which 80% of the construction waste was recycled.

“Recycling offers various benefits to a company, including the opportunity to help the environment, and it gives the company a tremendous amount of good PR,” adds Browning. “If they’re one of the first companies in their industry to build green, they should have a lot of good public relations opportunities. The companies that recycle are often featured in trade magazines.”

LEED Certification in Georgetown, TX

The TDS Green Builder Program helps companies that want to obtain LEED Certification with solid waste diversion options.. Not only can the companies who participate feel proud of saving precious natural resources, they can receive some great tax benefits. Companies who are interested should contact TDS before beginning construction, whenever possible.

One example of a simple yet powerful way that TDS can help guide plans during the pre-construction process can be seen with the new Carl Jr’s restaurant that is currently underway at Wolf Ranch Town Center. Restaurants generate a lot of corrugated cardboard, but it can only be recycled if it’s kept separate from the food waste. However, Georgetown City ordinances require that all trash and recycling enclosures be screened from view. It’s standard operating procedure for most companies to build a trash enclosure that is only large enough for one dumpster. Carl Jr’s built a double enclosure so that they could screen one dumpster for trash and another for cardboard recycling.

TDS also helps companies plan their landscaping to be as environmentally friendly as possible. Whether a company is building or renovating, TDS can haul away brush, which after being composted then becomes part of the compost that is available at Garden-Ville. By using mulch and landscape bedding such as that sold by Garden-Ville, companies can decrease their water usage.

[The Monument Café](#) in Georgetown uses Garden-Ville products in its gardens, as well as at the organic Monument Farm. The Monument is also one of Georgetown’s best businesses to regularly recycle a lot of their waste.

TDS’s newest offering is **Green Event Services**. This 100% turnkey program provides trash, recycling, and composting services for local events, including full staff to help make the program a success. TDS even takes care of documenting the amount of material recycled from a particular event. Making an event environmentally friendly gives a company a wonderful spin for any press release. In fact, many companies employing TDS Green Event Services have been featured on local news programs. Through this program, events can divert up to 83% of their waste away from the landfill.

How Garden-Ville and TDS Help Individuals

The Georgetown Garden-Ville, located at the City’s Collection Station on W.L. Walden Road, is one of seven Garden-Ville Stores in Central Texas. At the same facility, Georgetown residents can dispose of bulky trash and recycle yard waste.

Local homeowners and businesses can purchase high-quality soil and mulch. Garden-Ville also sells products that help homeowners compost their own organic waste.

“The biggest problem most home composters have is not enough nitrogen,” says Hertel. “We believe compost should be about 75% carbon-based materials such as leaves and wood chips, and the rest should be high-nitrogen food, and water.”

One effective compost activator is bat guano. TDS harvests the bat guano out of Brackenridge Caves near San Antonio, which the company then sells through its Garden-Ville outlets.

TDS collects Georgetown's recyclables, in addition to trash. Clear, green, and brown glass can be recycled, newspapers, cans, and plastics (#1 and #2 plastic only). There's no need to take the labels off before throwing items into the recycling bin. It's not necessary to clean out the items before putting them into the bin, although homeowners may choose to do so in order to control ants and other insects.

One of the greatest benefits that Garden-Ville provides to Georgetown residents is education. With the help of the Williamson County Master Gardeners, Garden-Ville periodically offers classes in organic gardening. They also donate products to the Junior Master Gardener program which educates children about gardening, including at the local Boys & Girls Club.

What's Next

TDS is scheduled to open their own Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in September in Creedmoor to process recycled materials. TDS has started a Single Stream Recycling program in the city of San Marcos. The company plans to extend that program to other cities and businesses, and with the opening of the MRF will be able to offer even more recycling options

The company is currently running a pilot program with Austin ISD. Children at five elementary schools sort their own food waste when they finish eating lunch. The organic waste is then added to the composting operation at Creedmoor. TDS is interested in testing a similar program with Georgetown ISD. The children love it, and it helps teach them specific steps they can take to show their respect for the environment.

Always looking for ways to improve and innovate, TDS is currently experimenting with an alternative fuel source made from tire chips and mulch. This fuel burns at the same BTU as coal but cleaner. Also, because it can be produced locally, there are fewer carbon emissions associated with transporting it to the fuel-burning facilities than would be the case with coal trucked in from across the country.

The company is also experimenting with a three-cart program. Instead of providing one cart for trash and a small bin for recycling, in other areas TDS provides residents with three carts – one for trash, one for recycling, and one for organic food waste that can be composted. (Meat, dairy, and fat cannot be composted.) Contamination is a problem when relying on residents to sort properly, but after problems are worked out TDS would like to expand this program to Georgetown and other Central Texas cities.

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