

Vers. 5.0 - 2005

**Woods End Agricultural Institute, Inc**  
**QUALITY SEAL OF APPROVAL &**  
**Quality Control Registration Program**



The Solvita Process

*Administered by:*

**Woods End Research Laboratories, Inc.**  
compost quality certifiers and consultants

***THE SEALS:***



## Welcome to *Woods End Agricultural Institute Seal of Approval and Quality Control Registration Program!*

**Congratulations** for choosing Woods End Agricultural Institute Quality Seal and Quality Control Registration program. This program offers two important means to bolster your product and raise your customer's satisfaction! Your choice of this program demonstrates to us and to your consumers that you do care about producing a high quality product.

We've designed the Seal program to be as easy and as reliable as possible! All that is required of you is to simply follow the instructions on page 3, checking off the boxes as you go.

The rest is up to us. Woods End will analyze your sample to see if it meets the specific requirement of quality. We will provide you with a laboratory report showing all that we test for. Then, we will match the laboratory report up with standards of quality set by Woods End. The quality requirements that your sample will be expected to meet are seen on pages 12-17.

If your product is within all the required ranges of quality (for intended use) you will receive:

- 1) A full laboratory report
- 2) A certificate of quality which you may display for product marketing
- 3) Solvita Process® Approval/ Registration notification form. (p.11) designating your product as "Approved" within a specific use category.
- 4) Permission to use the Solvita Process Quality Seal as a stickers or imprint for bagged products and on marketing materials.
- 5) Listing in Woods End's "Approved Products" database and on our web-site

If your product does not achieve the Quality Seal, it will be placed in the Quality Control Registration group. You will receive:

- 1) A full laboratory report
- 2) Solvita Quality Control /Registration form, (p.11), explaining the observed quality of your product compared to approved categories, and designating your compost as "registered" with an indication of the use-category your product is most likely to achieve.

Woods End offers full consulting services to clients who strive in reaching and maintaining the Quality standards with a cost effective Quality Control Program. We welcome your inquiry about this service.

Thank you!

## CHECK-LIST FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

Steps to Apply for Seal of Approval

1. Review Introduction and Table 1 (Page 4 and Page 5). Decide which of the product categories best describes your product. You DO NOT have to choose a product category if you are uncertain. Woods End will advise you of the best category.
2. Fill out the Application Form on page 10.
3. Attach bag text, flyers, brochures and other literature about your product, if available.
4. Prepare representative sample of product for laboratory analysis—see attached Chain of Custody sheet.
5. Review cost table (Page 9) and submit payment to Woods End Research Laboratory for testing and administration fee (\$500) along with the sample.

Please feel free to call Woods End to discuss benefits and procedure.

**Woods End Research Laboratory, Inc.**

PO Box 297

290 Belgrade Road

Mt Vernon MAINE 04352

207 293 2457 Fax 207 293 2488

email: [solvita@woodsend.org](mailto:solvita@woodsend.org)

This form may be obtained by downloading at:

[www.solvita.com/seal\\_appl.pdf](http://www.solvita.com/seal_appl.pdf)

## Introduction

### The Solvita Compost Quality Seal of Approval

The Solvita Compost Quality Approval Program is an independent, third-party validation process that issues a certificate that states that a compost or soil-amendment product meets performance standards consistent with directions for use of the product. This Quality Approval Program is available to any composter or distributor for any compost, topsoil compost or mulch product.

### Benefits to a Compost Producer Participating in a Quality Seal Program

The desire to satisfy and exceed consumer market quality expectations is the primary reason for a producer to participate in a Compost Quality Approval program. The professionalism and experience of Woods End Laboratory that stands behind the Solvita program, and the wide recognition of our name, is a primary reason why composters choose this particular program. Upon successful certification, Woods End will allow the use of our “Quality-Checked” seal and sticker or imprint on the approved batch of your compost product.

### Scope of Certification

Compost products are certified based on a specific stated use of a single batch of product. Woods End lays great emphasis on correctly identifying a product for its best use. The certification is available for six types or categories of products. **Table 1** (see next page) shows the various categories. If you are uncertain which category your product may meet, Woods End will aid you in making that determination.

### Batch Definition

The Quality Seal is issued based on a specific batch of product that is uniform in quality from beginning to end. Any significant change in ingredients, recipe, or process can result in a change in finished product quality, and therefore signals the beginning of a new batch. If no such change occurs, the product must be tested for re-certification at least every three months, or 20,000 cu.yd., whichever comes first.

### Registration for Quality Control

Composts that do not meet the highest Quality Seal approval criteria are approved as “registered” in the Quality Control program. You will not be charged the additional approval fee and your application will be designated “Quality Control Registered”. The compost category that most closely matches your sample will be indicated on the response form. Compost that is Registered may be designated “Tested and Registered” by Woods End Laboratories” but may not display or use the Solvita Seal.

**Table 1: SEAL of QUALITY APPROVAL CATEGORIES**

<b>Product Category</b>	<b>Allowed Use</b>	<b>Unique Properties</b>	<b>Suggested Application Rates</b>
<b>Seed Starter</b>	General plant substrate for starting seedlings in shallow containers for general gardening and later transplanting.	Fine texture, high air volume and water-holding capacity, mature organic matter, low salinity, low NH <sub>4</sub> , high available-N, moderate nutrient release potential	Generally used at rates of 25-100% of blend
<b>Container Mix</b>	Medium to large containers for growing out, nursery stock, house plants, and flowers.	High air volume and water holding capacity, mature organic matter, low salinity, low NH <sub>4</sub> , moderate to coarse texture, moderate nutrient release potential	Generally used at rates of 50-100% of blend
<b>Garden Compost</b>	All-purpose garden usage and greenhouse beds, incorporation in soil or container media at medium low to medium high application rates appropriate to soluble nutrient levels.	Med-high organic matter, moderate to high available nutrients and nutrient release potential, mature organic matter, M to MH salinity; low C:N ratio, low NH <sub>4</sub> :NO <sub>3</sub> ratio	Generally used at rates of 50 - 500 lbs/100 ft <sup>2</sup>
<b>Topsoil Blend</b>	Topsoil replacement, direct seeding, lawn-care, soil repair and garden raised beds.	Simulates rich native topsoil, moderate to high (for soil) organic matter, low C:N ratio, low salinity, stable, low NH <sub>4</sub> :NO <sub>3</sub> ratio	Generally used for fill and soil replacement up to 100%
<b>Mulch</b>	A coarse blend for surface application only, under shrubs and for general non-growth purposes; 1"-8" thick surface application for weed control, gradual nutrient release, and surface organic matter improvement	High organic matter, moderate to high C:N ratio, low to very low salinity and soluble nutrients, low NH <sub>4</sub> :NO <sub>3</sub> ratio	Generally used for cover layers up to 100%
<b>Natural Fertilizer</b>	A high nutrient product best suited to be used sparingly to add nutrients to soil.	Dry-stable, spreadable, low dust, passes pathogen tests, high available nutrients, and rapid nutrient release potential	Generally used at rates of 3 - 75 lbs/100ft <sup>2</sup>

## Eligibility Requirements for Certification

There are no restrictions on who can apply to the program. It is generally assumed that an applicant is a compost producer or distributor who has demonstrable control of the stated product(s). It is expected that the producer possesses the financial resources to participate and maintain a Quality Approval management program; it is assumed that the compost producer is highly motivated to enter the market based on product credibility.

## Simple Guidelines for Seeking Approval and Registration

The following is a list of some simple steps to achieving and maintaining a compost quality approved product.

### 1. Producer Organization

A producer/distributor is an entity organized and equipped in such a manner to be able to exercise reasonable control of the product and perform the requisite functions and processes in a satisfactory fashion.

### 2. On-Site and Point of Sale Inspection

On-site inspections are not required for Solvita approval. However, an implied component of certification is that the producer would pass a reasonable on-site evaluation by the certifiers or their representatives. Criteria for such an inspection would be that the facility would generally be capable of meeting any and all applicable state and federal environmental rules. These pertain to design, set-backs, surface water control and adequacy of equipment.

Point of Sale or in-market inspections are not required, but are recommended as a procedure to check consistency of product quality.

### 3. Quality Management System

The strength of a quality certification is all the greater the more the producer maintains active quality management. While a quality control system is the responsibility of the producer, the Solvita program's Quality Control Registration process aids in identifying the best target category for the compost and therefore helps define QC needs.

A compost company which obtains, harvests or resells a composted product from another company is eligible for quality certification based on a specified batch of product. However, it is recommended that such a reseller carefully ascertain their ability to predict and manage quality for on-going batches.

#### **4. Sampling Requirements/ Sample Control**

Meeting the criteria for certification requires periodic sampling, and the producer must have the ability to meet these conditions. Failure to do so could result in withdrawal of certification. In specific cases, the certifier will obtain samples independently to maintain the credibility of the program, at no added cost to producer.

#### **5. Recordkeeping Requirements**

The Solvita Seal of Approval program does not require specific records. However, a compost producer should be capable of keeping and maintaining suitable records, observations and calculations and any derived data to meet the criteria of certification. Thus, when compost conditions change or quality varies, the explanation may be easily sought and found in the management records.

#### **6. Lab Test Data Requirements**

The Solvita Seal of Approval program depends on data generated by the Woods End testing program. Other lab data may be useful for quality control but will not be used for purposes of certification.

#### **7. Available Operational Manuals**

The Solvita Quality Approval Program does not regulate or certify how or by what method a compost is produced. However, it is advisable that an operations manual exist to guide personnel in the duties and tasks of site management and product control in order to continually meet criteria of certification. Operations manuals are the responsibility of the producer. Absence of an operations manual can compromise the ability of a producer to meet guidelines established by certification and may therefore result in untimely removal or denial of certification.

#### **8. Appeals & Liability Procedures**

There is no established appeal process for products that do not meet Solvita standards. The producer should simply re-apply at such time as new product or improved batches become available. Because the Seal of Quality program is not a warranty or guarantee of performance, no liability accrues to Woods End Research Laboratory or its representatives concerning the Quality Seal.

## Overview of Categories of Approval and Standards Involved

A successful application in the Solvita program will result in recognition that a compost product meets a specific use category and has been adequately tested for this use. For each of the six categories of certification, a standard exists which contains test parameters and the range of values for which compliance must be demonstrated. An implied limitation is that there can be no warranted quality in event the product is incorrectly classified or is used outside the scope of the approved use, or changes after testing. In most cases, Woods End will immediately advise during the initial testing if in its opinion the category is not appropriate. In some cases, it is a simple matter of re-classifying the product.

Approval within any category of product implies meeting of all the specific standards. The parameters tested are the same for all categories, however the values required for approval are different depending on the category (see Standards on pages 12-17). The following table gives an overview of categories and the key parameters valued to achieve approval.

**Table 2: Key Quality Parameters for Seal of Approval**

COMPOST CATEGORY APPROVED	Primary Discriminators						
	pH, Moisture	Maturity Index	Organic Matter	Salts. Sol.- Ions	Minerals	Density	Plant Growth
Seed Starter	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Container Mix	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Garden Compost	*	*	*	*	*		*
Topsoil Blend	*	*	*	*			*
Mulch	*		*	*		*	
Natural Fertilizer	*				*	*	*

## Fee Basis for Quality Approval and Registration Program

Summary: The application for and successful award of a Seal of Approval or Quality Control Registration may include one or more of the following: a lab fee, an administration fee and an approval Fee. Optional stick-on Seals are available at a per unit rate.

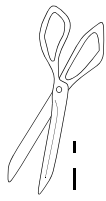
**Table 3: Cost Schedule, Quality Approval Process**

	Certifi- cate Fee	Test Fee per Batch	Compost Matrix b	Solvita SEAL <sup>a</sup> Options
	Charged only if approved	Manda- tory	Can also be purchased seperatly	Certificate Bag Sticker. Bag Imprint
<b>Costs, All Categories</b>	\$ 375	\$ 500	\$ 150	Imprint = See below a
<b>Cost Options:</b>				
Total Program with Seal of Approval:	.....		\$ 875	
Total Program, Re-Approval in year	.....		\$ 875	
Quality Control Registration ONLY	.....		\$ 500	
Re-Test & Re-Registration ONLY	.....		\$ 500	

a. Digital imprint is licensed per 1000-units of imprinted material. Rates vary with size from 16.50/M @ <50,000 bags tp 7.25/M @ 5-million bags.

b. Compost Matrix include with Test Fee per batch. Is avaiible seperatly for a fee of \$175 with testing required.

<u>Quantity of Bags#</u>	<u>Logo License Rate \$/M</u>
<50,000	16.50
<100,000	13.50
<200,000	10.00
<500,000	9.00
<1,500,000	7.50
<5,000,000	7.25



# APPLICATION FORM

REV: 5.0

## Woods End Agricultural Institute, Inc SEAL-OF-APPROVAL

(please use one separate sheet for each product)

<b>DATE:</b>	<b>Woods End use only:</b>
	Quality Seal Approval _____ Quality Registration Only _____ For (date and batch):  Reviewer Initials:

<b>SELLER'S MAIN LOCATION:</b>		<b>PRODUCTION SITE (if different):</b>
Name		
Company/Firm		
Address		
City, State, Zip		
Telephone #		Fax #

**CHECK ONE :** New Application \_\_\_\_\_ Re-Application \_\_\_\_\_ QC Registration Only: \_\_\_\_\_ Re-Registration: \_\_\_\_\_  
Previous Approval or QC-Registration (Date and Product): \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Describe intended use of product and category desired.** (Attach product flyers, brochures and product bags, if any)

**2. Describe batch sizes and characteristics to distinguish a batch** (Note: maximum batch size that can be approved is 20,000 cu.yd. or three months, whichever is first) See Page 4.

**Date started:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date Ended:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Size of Batch:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Other Factors:**

**3. List ingredients in product in decreasing order of percentage:**

**4. Describe production process (equipment, technology, time)**

**5. Describe post-production processing, packaging etc.**

**I attest that this information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge, and that I have read and agree to the terms and conditions of this application document, §Appendix 2, ¶1-10 (pages 19-20):**

**Applicant Signature and Title:** \_\_\_\_\_  
SIGN AND PRINT NAME AND TITLE





# SOLVITA QUALITY SEAL OF APPROVAL & REV: 5.0 QUALITY CONTROL REGISTRATION

(this form will be returned to applicant)

<b>DATE :</b>		<b>Certifiers Initials:</b>	<b>CLIENT CONTACT:</b>
<b>PRODUCER:</b>			<b>New Approval:</b>
Name			<b>Registration Only:</b>
Company / Firm			Re-Approval:
PO Box, Suite			Re-Reg- istration
Street			Previous Approval/ Regis. Category:
City, State, Zip			Previous Test Date:
Telephone #			Acct#
			Fax #
			LAB REPORT # :

**Approved for Quality Seal [    ]    Quality Control Registered ONLY [    ]**

Product or Brand Name:	
Seal-of-Approval Category:	
Quality Control Category: (if not approved for SEAL)	
Production Site Location:	

**Terms and Conditions:**

*Allowed use of Certificate and Seal Stickers or Imprint:* All allowed product description, labeling, and advertisement must be consistent with the approved use for the designated category.

*Seal of Approval Batch definition:* \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] QUALITY CONTROL REGISTRATION: ***Conditions in order to achieve Quality Seal***

*Registration signifies that a compost has been tested and the conditions to achieve the Quality Seal have been identified. Such products may not be designated "Approved" and may not carry the Solvita SEAL.*

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX 1: Glossary of Terminology

Language or terms referring to a producer who satisfies the criteria established by an approval program vary greatly. Expressions commonly include: “accredited”, “certified”, “approved”, “quality checked”, “inspected”, “accepted”, or “nationally recognized”. Some of these terms may be used by differing organizations to signify very different types of assessment. Such terms may have differing legal implications; or reflect varying state, local and private organizations’ authority to conduct approvals and certification.

The expressions “Certified” and “Seal of Approval” are popular terms signifying that a product meets a specific mark or seal designated and governed by a specific program. “Solvita Quality Checked” and “Solvita Quality Control” are such a marks.

The expression “Intended for” and “Best Use” are designations that a product is intended for and advantageously used in a specific application for which it has been designed. The expression “Topsoil-Blend” and “Potting Mix”, etc., are guidelines. A “Seal of Quality” issued in these cases is meant for the intended use and for none other.

The expressions “Fertilizer” or “Nutrient” may fall under official agricultural agency regulations. Woods End makes no representation that the use of words on products within the Solvita approval program meet specific state rules. Woods End may elect to advise on terminology and requirements to comply with these rules.

The term “Organic” has specialized meaning and is not controlled or warrantied under the Solvita-Quality Seal program. The expression “Compost” as used within Organic farming carries specific meaning and must meet standards as established under the USDA Final Rule (7 CFR Part 205 National Organic Program Rule- Federal Register, Dec. 20, 2000). Organic compost may be governable in the future as to content by under the USDA NOP program.

The term “Label” is considered to refer to an N-P-K (nutrient) label as registered with the appropriate Departments of Agriculture and displayed on a commercial product. This Label is not controlled, accredited or warrantied under the Seal of Approval program. The expression “environmental” or “biosolids” may fall under EPA or state agency rule. In these and all cases, it is assumed that all local, state and federal requirements have been met by the applicant.

## APPENDIX 2: Factors for Consideration

### 1. Standards Applied

The specific selection of standards and test methods used in the approval process are solely the creation of Woods End Research Laboratory. The chosen tests and standards may change from time to time based on new information and best-available research results. Woods End performs on going research on related matters of product performance, field studies and complies with other independent laboratory approval/validation programs, where deemed necessary. Woods End reserves the right to modify and/or upgrade its standards where new information becomes avail-

able justifying the change. Woods End reserves the right at any time to present or publish the basis for standards and guidelines if it is deemed in the interest of the overall Solvita Approval mark.

## **2. Non-Exclusivity**

The Solvita Seal of Quality is an open system and is not exclusive. Participation in the Solvita approval program is not conditional on a producer's membership in any organization or association, nor are producers required to acquire, purchase or use products of any specific firm or organization to meet the guidelines established in the approval process.

## **3. Conflicts-of-Interest**

To maintain credibility, the Solvita approval program claims freedom from apparent or implied conflicts-of-interest on the part of its body, its assessors and the products certified. The Solvita program and the laboratory that comprises its assessments, Woods End Research Laboratory, are independent with regard to all producers and have no relationships which could in any way influence the objectivity and outcome of the approval process. Woods End reserves the right to refuse to confer approval at any point in the process if any conflict becomes apparent that may compromise the credibility of the approval process. Woods End does not consider routine analytical testing and technical consulting to represent a conflict-of-interest in an approval program.

## **4. Seal of Approval Records**

Woods End Research Laboratory will maintain confidential records and files on accredited producers pertaining to all aspects of assessments performed; including testing record, batch identification, inspection reports; 3rd-party laboratory data; staff qualifications and internal quality checks.

The owner/producer of an accredited product may not place restrictions on these records that in any way compromise the credibility of the approval process. Woods End reserves the right to promote the program openly and to publicize the list of approved products. Accredited parties may obtain from Woods End at any time a list of all other approved products. Outside parties or compost users may freely request proof of approval by calling Wood End and ascertaining verbally or via access to a published web-list list the names of products approved.

## **5. Enforcement and Follow-Up**

There is no penalty for loss of the Solvita Quality Seal of Approval. Woods End does not disseminate or publish lists of non-approved products. Woods End is developing mechanisms to minimize the potential for fraud and deception regarding the approval process. This may include periodic re-assessments to ensure continued compliance with approval criteria, especially with regard to changes in batch size. Other procedures include spot checks of products in the marketplace and non-scheduled site visits. Woods End may also rely on its representatives and subsidiaries to collect samples and report practices for products and producers. An implied aspect of

enforcement is Woods End's obligation and ability to swiftly withdraw approved status from producers who fail to comply with all the terms and requirements of approval. In place are also procedures to notify other interested parties of a change in approval status, including publishing updates in a newsletter and on the Woods End Solvita home page ([www.woodsend/soq.html](http://www.woodsend/soq.html)).

## **6. Recognition of Certification Scheme**

Recognition and acceptance of named approval is a key to adding value to a product. Woods End actively promotes the Solvita quality mark. The Solvita test kit process is officially recognized by many states and several countries. Woods End retains the right to market and license the approval program in any way deemed advantageous.

## **7. Appeals Process**

Woods End retains the right to approve/disapprove any product based on its own approval scheme. An appeals process has not been developed to handle disagreements that may arise in the approval process. There is no approval fee assessed if a product does not pass the full seal program. Woods End will disclose the exact reasons that a disapproval has been made.

## **8. Hold-Harmless**

The composter holds harmless Woods End and its representatives and assigns for any liability arising out of the use or misuse of the stated products under the approval process.

## **9. Disclaimer**

This Seal Program is not a substitute for regulatory testing. The analytical process does not necessarily include parameters that are required for meeting specific environmental or regulatory programs such as EPA-503, or state DEP, DOT programs. An implied requirement of meeting QSAP procedures is that customers' products have met all other applicable rules for environmental testing. It is recommended that the customer have these data available for each compost product submitted for examination.

## **10. Approval Seal and Text**

Approval of compost by Woods End results in issuance of a Seal of Approval document, which is a visual mark to enable rapid recognition of a producers compliance with the Solvita certification program. Upon approval, this seal may be affixed to a sample bag, or a product brochure at the time of marketing, as per the approval agreement. Special restrictions exist in event the Seal is to be imprinted graphically on a product bag. Guidelines apply for the quantity of imprints matched to the batch, in addition to a fee per seal imprint.

In addition to a seal, a standard letter of acceptance gives the conditions of the acceptance, the product(s) identification(s), the designation of the products, and the time frame and batch ID relevant of the certification.