

Recycling Food Waste from Station Building Shops for Compost

Verry Merry is a flower shop on the first floor of Granduo, a department store in the JR Tachikawa station building. You can see the small bags filled with compost on the store shelves. The labels read "Recycled food waste from Granduo," signifying that the compost is made of recycled food waste from restaurants in the department store.



Norihiro Okuma

Manager, Management Administration Group,
Management Planning Department,
JR East Department Store Co., Ltd.

"The sale of compost from food waste is a recycling activity that produces tangible results and thus stimulated the environmental awareness of our employees."

Granduo Tachikawa has 40 restaurants under its roof, more than most other station buildings. These establishments produce 440 tons of food scraps and food waste annually, accounting for roughly 1/4 of all waste by weight. Granduo recycles all food waste as compost, part of which is sold at the flower shop. "Turning food waste from restaurants into compost and returning the product to our customers is a recycling activity I have long dreamed of," says Manager Norihiro Okuma at the Management Administration Group of the Management Planning Department in explaining the rationale behind recycling.

JR East Department Store Co., Ltd., which operates



▶ The restaurants on the 6th and 7th floors; leftover food accounts for 90% of food waste.

Granduo, is doing its best to lower the environmental impact of its activities based on a policy of harmonizing business activities with environmental consciousness. From its start, a cross-functional project team was set up to handle business, general affairs, and equipment of the Department Store. The environmental impact of business activities was identified and ways to process food waste, which turned out to be the greatest issue, were determined. As a result, food waste processors were installed at businesses opening in 1999.

Food waste from restaurants is placed in a food waste processor at the Recycle Center on the first floor. The waste is then mixed with fermentation bacteria and dried at a temperature of 60 to 80°C for around 24 hours to produce compost material. This material is then sent to a fertilizer manufacturer in Gumma Prefecture where it is mixed with other materials and fermented to become compost in about 90 days.

One of the greatest challenges in recycling food waste is to ensure that other waste items do not get mixed into the food waste. Chopsticks and other items were often mixed into the food waste in the busy kitchens of restaurants. In response, training seminars were held to explain the significance of recycling to the staffs and managers of stores as well as told those with poor waste sorting practices to improve their operations. Food waste recycling is now a firmly established practice and other wastes are sorted into 19 different categories before disposal. Now that the recycle rate of wastes has been achieved 60%, therefore the next goal is to develop environmentally friendly products. "I would like to focus on the sale of products that are friendly to the environment," Okuma says passionately.



▶ Granduo Tachikawa, the department store located next to JR Tachikawa Station



▶ Compost is sold at the flower shop near the first floor entrance at a price of 315 yen (including tax) per 300 g.



▶ Organic compost Recycle Power GD300

▶ Food-waste processor; about 1.5 tons of food waste is processed every day.

