What Is Biochar?



Nicholas Rich-Vetsch, PE (MN,ND), TRUE Advisor







"What we today call biochar is in fact a recently-invented term for a very old material – charcoal. ...

the new name has perhaps caused researchers to overlook previous research into the properties of charcoal.

Are we in danger of reinventing the wheel?"

Charcoal vs. Biochar vs. Activated Carbon











vs. Carbon Black

Produc Energits (2011), https://www.chait.net/Lauribous-Stappools-new-hait-Boom-Universition stanuming/ (vinite).https://www.chait.net/Lauribous.chait.com/ https://www.laul.out.com/anergative.com/ news/activative.com/or (sebtem lots) https://www.laul.out.com/anergative.com/ news/activative.com/or (sebtem lots) https://www.laul.out.com/anergative.com/activative.com/or (sebtem lots) laul.com/anergative.com/anergative.com/activative.com/activative.com/ laul.com/anergative.com/anergative.com/activative.com/activative.com/ laul.com/anergative.com/activative.com/activative.com/ laul.com/anergative.com/activative.com/ laul.com/anergative.com/activative.com/ laul.com/activative.com/activative.com/ laul.com/activative.com/ https://activative.com/ https://ac

Unearthing the Past: The Forgotten History of Biochar Guy Shrubsole, November 2010 https://guyshrubsole.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/unearthing-the-past-gshrubsole-nov-2010.pd Biochar is a <u>filter</u>, not a fertilizer – when the filter is "filled" or "charged" with sorbed nutrients, it then becomes a slow-release fertility amendment.





How is making Biochar different than burning?







https://w ww.alam y.com/st ockphoto/sol id-liquidgasplasma.h tml?sort By=relev ant



Thermal Conversion of Biomass DEPENDS ON HEAT AND OXYGEN

Gasification vs Pyrolysis

 Must think about thermal conversions based on heat and oxygen use





Circulating fluid-bed gasifier

https://www.allpowerlabs.com/pp30-power-pallet

Entranined flow gasifier

How to make Biochar?



Oregon Kiln – Flame Cap Principle



Oregon kiln, loaded and ready to



Oregon kiln, mid burn.

Making good BioChar at 600°F.

light. Open-Source Design Plans - <u>wilsonbiochar.com/shop/ols/products/open-source-kiln-designs-oregon-kiln-and-ring-of-fire-kiln</u>





Coming 2024: Phoenix Biochar



ECOVERSE







Shredders

Windrow

Turners



Depackagers

Conveyors



ECOSTACK



The machine follows fuel/invasives clearing crews, leaving behind sequestered carbon. A diesel-electric power system allows crews to power/charge other equipment while idle, diesel engines are also adaptable to future use of hydrogen or renewable natural gas.

ECOVERSE

A conveyor and cooling auger system deposit nutrient capturing biochar.

Whole brush goes in

the top, no chipper

needed.



Komptech Americas Is Now Viably



See what new can do for you.



Indirect Pyrolysis

https://commons.wikimedia.org /wiki/File:Example_incandescen ce_colors_%28temperature_ran ge_550_-_1300_C%29.svg





TLUD – Top Lit Up-Draft, Gasifier?

Autothermal Pyrolysis

Champion Stove

mage c



Boulder Biochar Barrel - The Brewmaster

\$2,999 + shipping

2 Barrel kit for running a generator motor \$1,999 + Shipping

https://www.hpbiochar.com/boulder-biochar-barrel















biomassenergytechniques.com

Glanris





https://www.haiqienergyfromwaste.com/





25 ton/day Regenerator







Five 25 ton/day Regenerators





Transport, Transfer, & Storage Considerations

0.0

How does Biochar sequester carbon?





https://cropaia.com/blog/soil-carbon-sequestration-mitigate-climate-change/



Carbon Credits

- (existing) If a tree falls in the woods, how much carbon is released when it burns in a forest fire? -98%-
- (proposed) With the right reactor, -50%- of that carbon could be locked in biochar for 100s to1000s of years.
- (credit) = (existing) –
 (proposed)
- It's easier to prove that carbon is unavailable to decomposition and fire deep underground than it is to prove it in complex soil biology.







Sustainable biochar to mitigate global climate change

Dominic Woolf¹, James E. Amonette², F. Alayne Street-Perrott¹, Johannes Lehmann³ & Stephen Joseph⁴ Slide by Bridget Ulrich, NRRI, presented March 16, 2023



Values

1. No poverty

Farmers are well paid for the production of biochar with money derived from carbon credit sales. This is a second source of income besides regular farming. The produced biochar is applied on the fields of the farmer. Therefore, farmers also become less dependent on the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, of which the price is increasing steeply.

Artisanal biochar production by farmers in India includes a financial movement from large wealthy corporations to the hard working, generally poor farmers. With the ND financial influx from wealthy to poor, Dutch Carboneers aim is to reduce the financial inequalities between the Global North and the Global South. T****

farm.

2. Zero hunger

In the Odisha region, farmers deal with depleted grounds and long periods of drought. Most of them are rice farmers and have a little garden for their own food supply, Biochar is proven to increase crop yield, nutritional value and resistance to insects and drought.

3. Good health & well-being

Biomass is not always valued in the Odisha region. Therefore, to get rid of it, farmers light the residues on fire on their fields. This leads to misty smoke clouds which are detrimental for the health of the farmers. Also, biochar captures and holds heavy metals and other toxic elements, which thus do not end up in the edible parts of the plant, but are kept isolated in the ground.

5. Gender equality

Bu emplouing women as artisanal farmers as well as (head) supervisors, a position of equality is created. Women will be directing and working besides men in an equal way. Women will also be paid an equal amount of money for an equal amount of work. In giving women key roles in the system, we empower them.

8. Decent work & economic growth

The biochar will increase yields for their own production, leading to actual growth of their income. Dutch Carboneers is supporting an extra source of income for the whole region. This evokes not only extra jobs directly but also economic growth in the whole region for work that is better paid than rice production.

carbon content.

10. Reduced inequalities

12. Responsible consumption & production

Rice farmers often burn the rice straw residues in the field. Besides being

detrimental for the climate, it is foremost a waste of natural goods. With production

of biochar the earlier regarded waste is transformed into a soil enhancer for the

With biochar production, carbon stored in biomass is brought from the short term and active carbon cycle towards the long term and inactive carbon cycle.

Depending on the quality of biochar, carbon is stabilized in the soil for at least a

14. Life below water

Because of the porous internal structure of biochar, nutrients are attracted and stored in biochar, this prevents leaching out of nutrients into surrounding surface water and thus eutrophication. Eutrophication of waterways lead to uncontrollable algal blooms and the suffocation of life below water.

15. Life on land

Besides biochar production, a variety of trees are planted throughout the project area. In the project area there is a huge monoculture of rice. The planting of various trees at the borders of each farm creates a more biodiverse ecosystem instead of the present rice monoculture. Biochar also is applied in farming soils, where it helps fight desertification, makes arid areas fertile again and increases micro-biological life in the soil.







13. Climate action



GENDER

e





LIFE BELOW

13 CLIMATE



What opportunitie\$ are there in Biochar for \$oil amendment producer\$, vendor\$, applicator\$, and u\$er\$/benefactor\$?



https://medium.com/the-coffeelicious/swimming-in-my-money-like-scrooge-mcduck-fc2140e78ee

- Processing Carbon Credits
- Blending
- Vending
 - Biochar
 - Byproducts
- Application
- User Benefits
 - Nutrient Retention Slow Release – Sell More Compost
 - Nutrient Capture Clean Water
 - Carbon Sequestration
 - Sustainable Replacement for Coal, Peat, or Activated Carbon

Compost for fertility

What are the primary reasons your garden has requested compost from the county? Select all that apply.



Other reasons for requesting high compost volumes





Slides by Natalie Hoidal, UMN Extension, presented 10/5/2023

MN Composting Council white paper

- Composting process reduces N availability but has a limited impact on P – P has the potential to leach from compost
- BUT compost improves the water holding capacity of soil and may reduce runoff and leaching overall
- Conclusion: compost users should try to prevent erosion and improve water holding capacity in the soil. Compost can help do this, <u>as long as it's not applied in excess, particularly in sandy</u> soils.

http://www.mncompostingcouncil.org/u ploads/1/5/6/0/15602762/mncc_p_white_ paper_3-19_final.pdf.pdf

Relationships between soil parameters

- Strongest predictors of P:
 - Organic matter
 - Potassium
 - Weak relationship with electrical conductivity



Slides by Natalie Hoidal, UMN Extension, presented 10/5/2023

Evidence for P thresholds



Slides by Natalie Hoidal, UMN Extension, presented 10/5/2023

GardenType • Garden • Raised bed

Measuring the Fate of Compost-Derived Phosphorus in Native Soil below Urban Gardens

https://www.mdpi.com/1 660-4601/16/20/3998









Is the conclusion that phosphorus is leaving garden beds, or that *the right subsoils* are doing their job to sorb the phosphorus?

What other amendments or other garden practices can mitigate phosphorus leaching and allow gardeners to maintain fertile growing environments?

Slides by Natalie Hoidal, UMN Extension, presented 10/5/2023

The bad news

- "Very high" for commercial growers: 34 ppm
- "Very high" for gardeners: 18 ppm
- Median values
 - Bare ground: 86
 - Raised beds: 123

Leaching and Stormwater Filter

Plants need available N, P, K, and micronutrients. You cannot have a vegetated system without available (leachable) nutrients. Biochar is the perfect solution to concerns of nutrient leaching and can be used to contain nutrients as they move from rooting zones to export.



to improve pollutant removal coarse biochar pipe bedding to capture anything leached from above

Multi-functional Surface Mulch

Mine:









A - Fibric B - Hemic C - Hemic D - Sapric nominal sand, silt, or caly content



https://hal.science/hal-01665385/document







Press release Published 27 August 2022



Sale of horticultural peat to be banned in move to protect England's precious peatlands The sale of peat for use in the amateur gardening sector will

be banned by 2024 to protect peatlands and the natural

environment.

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/sale-of-horticultural-peat-to-be-banned-in-move-to-protect-englands-preciouspeatlands#;~:text=All%20sales%20of%20peat%20to,in%20a%20near%2Dnatural%20state. https://www.nurserymag.com/a rticle/biochar-peat-mossalternative-illinois-research/

Peatlands are unique ecosystems and massive carbon sinks. Some excavations of peat soils for construction or remediation are necessary; mining peat for use in horticulture releases the stored carbon as the peat decomposes in plantings.



Biochar could replace peat moss in the nursery industry New potting mix research from the University of Illinois investigates biochar as a peat alternative.







Peat Replacement Biochar, Charcoal, et al., **meet official definitions of Peat**



THE OCCURRENCE AND USES OF PEAT IN THE UNITED STATES E. K. SOPER and C. C. OSBON 1922 https://pubs.usgs.gov/bul/0728/report.pdf DEFINITIONS.

The terms "peat" and "muck" are often used interchangeably to designate either of those materials-a practice that is confusing and that should be discouraged. Peat is the partly carbonized organic residuum produced by an arrest in the decomposition of roots, trunks of trees, twigs, seeds, shrubs, mosses, and other vegetation covered or saturated with water. It contains a large proportion of the carbon of the original vegetable matter, and its vegetal structure is generally visible without the microscope. It is usually acidic, and it contains much less inorganic than organic matter. In fact, some pure peats contain less than 4 per cent of inorganic material. Muck is soil that contains a high percentage of uncarbonized organic matter; but, as the name is commonly applied to drained and oxidized areas of peat under cultivation, it is difficult to draw the line between peat and muck; peat may grade into muck and muck into peat. If the material will ignite and burn freely when dry it is usually considered peat.

Figure 6: EPA and MN Processes Compared to Temperature Benchmarks

Per USCC/AAPECO: Compost is the product manufactured through the controlled aerobic, biological decomposition of biodegradable materials. The product has undergone mesophilic and thermophilic temperatures, which significantly reduces the viability of emperature pathogens and weed seeds (in accordance with EPA 40 CFR 503 standards) and stabilizes the carbon such that it is beneficial to plant growth.



Figure from The Composting Handbook, 2021

Types of Compost: Not All Created Equal

C:N	>30:1 (mulch)	30:1 – 20:1 (compost)	<20:1 (manure)
Fertility	Consumes Nutrients	Balanced	Fertilizes
Microbes	Low	Moderate	High
Risk to Plants	Moderate	Low	Moderate / High
Uses	Stormwater Treatment / Erosion Control	Carbon Amendment / Erosion Control	Fertility Amendment
Feedstocks	Yard Waste or Wood	Food Scraps or Yard Waste	Manure or Biosolids

>> more aging = more balanced = less risk to plants <<



Adding biochar as a composting feedstock can that would otherwise be lost to contact water ponds and causing odor issues.

How to support development of the emerging Biochar industry?

What's Happening in MN

- Inaugural MN Biochar Summit June 2023 101 attendees
- MN Biochar Initiative incorporated September 2023
- City of Minneapolis rotary kiln coming early 2024
- Biochar as a Soil Amendment in Minnesota: Findings from Literature and Interviews
 - Samantha Hunt and Sustainable Farming Association (SFA), May 2023
 - <u>https://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/254647</u>
- Carlton SWCD Oregon Kilns https://carltonswcd.org/biochar-kilns
 - Dovetail Partners https://www.dovetailinc.org/portfolio.php?Tag=Biochar
- Great River Greening Oregon Kilns
- Northstar Lime, Crookston FPEP grant
- Northeast Clean Energy Resource Team (CERT) multiple projects
- UMD agricultural usage
- NRRI biochar properties and coal replacement in steelmaking
- UMN St. Anthony Falls Laboratory stormwater treatment
- UMN CEGE / BBE lifecycle impact and business case
- UMN CBS surface water quality
- Carba / UMN carbon sequestration banking
- USDA NRCS soil application projects



HIERARCHY OF ASH TREE MATERIAL MANAGEMENT

Most preferred environmental option





- Use app while • producing biochar
- Automated • process reporting
- Carbon credit certification
- Grant reporting

https://www.biocharco-op.com/

Research and Knowledge Sharing





https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Countries-and-regionscontributed-to-biochar-research-during-1999-2018 fig4 337949471 Biochar-related studies from 1999 to 2018: a bibliometrics-based review

USBI North American Chapters

https://biochar-us.org/regional-groups

pnwbiochar.org





IBI biochar-international.org USBI biochar-us.org USBC usbiocharcoalition.org MNCC/MNBI mncompostingcouncil.org/biochar



Nicholas.Vetsch@Stantec.com