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Nuts & Bolts

Deciding what type of screen meets an operation's needs can be guided by end markets to be tapped. Recent buyers and vendors offer insights and evaluation tips.

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WHEN it comes to selling compost, the markets can drive equipment purchase decisions. This was the case for the Lehigh County, Pennsylvania yard trimmings composting operation, which produced 14,000 cubic yards of compost in 2007. "We are doing a lot of work with a soil amendment company that makes products for golf courses," says Tim Bollinger, Composting Operations Manager for the Lehigh County Office of Solid Waste. "We couldn't get the product they needed out of a trommel and they are looking for a 3/8-inch minus particle size. Also, our site is on compacted subsoil, which is 100 percent shale. We can't have flakes of shale in a product for golf clubs." The operation, which already owns a Rawson trommel and an Erin star screen, purchased a CEC deck screen to tap this high-end market. The screen provides a three way product split, which is beneficial for another market the county services - erosion and sediment control and storm water management. "Erosion control is a very important market for the middle fraction," adds Bollinger. "This is material that is less than 2-inch minus but greater than 3/8-inch. It is a real benefit in erosion and sediment control because it allows water to pass through, but holds back the sediment." For its mulch operation, the county finds that its star screen works well, especially when the material is high in moisture. "The trommel can be a workhorse in terms of screening a lot of compost and mulch, but when we have a lot of rainy weather, as we've had this winter, we can't put the material through our trommel," he says. "We originally purchased our star screen to deal with higher moisture products."

The county has a 1/4-inch minus screen plate for the bottom deck for customers who want a very fine compost product. "Screening to that size is when you have to be concerned about moisture with a deck screen," notes Bollinger. "The material has to be extremely dried out for a long period of time, and you still have way too much material in the overs fraction. We charge a lot and the customer has to want a lot to make it economical for us to produce a 1/4-inch minus product