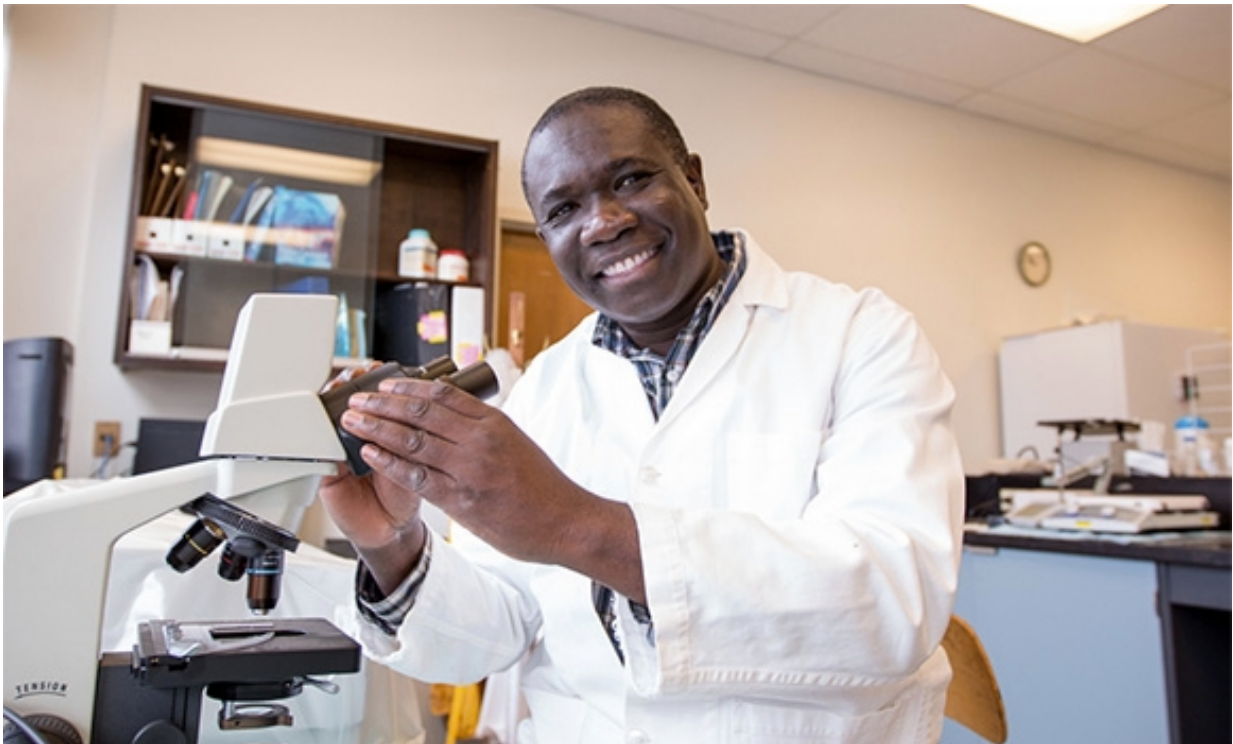


New and better ways to use compost in agriculture

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Lord Abbey, assistant professor in the Department of Plant & Animal Science.
Credit: Johanna Matthews photo

You may know that compost often makes for good fertilizer. But could your green-bin discards be brewed into something even more powerful?

Lord Abbey, an assistant professor with the Department of Plant &

Animal Science in Dal's Faculty of Agriculture is investigating just that.

"As a teenager who grew up in a city, the source of my food had always been a mystery to me," he says. "I wanted to do medicine but I was curious about the work of nature and the wisdom of our farmers. As a result, I decided to pursue agriculture, obtaining a BSc Agriculture in Ghana."

Compost is used in a variety of fields and specialties including agriculture, horticulture and even for erosion control. Composting and compost use has been on Dr. Abbey's radar for quite a while now.

"It's about time to explore the versatility of compost and its derivatives in other ways for its further promotion and value-addition and to open up new research and business opportunities," he says, adding that such uses can boost consumer confidence and offer a chance for producers to make a bit more money while safeguarding the environment.

Tea time!

Dr. Abbey is researching just how useful compost can be and is trying to find new and better ways to use it in agriculture.

His work includes the impact of drying and ionizing radiation effects on compost and plant response, and compost tea formulation for flower and foliage vase-life extension.

Compost tea is exactly what it sounds like: compost is used and sits in water in something like a tea bag to attempt to get all of the nutrients out of it and the "tea" is then used to fertilize [plants](#). This [tea](#) will be tested to see if it will lengthen the life span of grazing crops, also known as "forages."

In addition to this, Dr. Abbey is working on an agro-economic assessment of the long-term application of green bin compost. This involves looking at how putting green bin [compost](#) in the soil will affect how productive the plant will grow and impact on soil health over an extended period of time.

"The goal of my research is to develop a sustainable, horticultural production system based on integrated and efficient crop management strategies and a food system approach to crop diversification," adds Dr. Abbey.

Provided by Dalhousie University

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