

Exploring Biochar

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Biochar is a term applied to any organic material or "biomass" that has been burned or charred with limited oxygen, as is done when making commercial charcoal for fuel. This process is called pyrolysis. The variation of pyrolysis used to make biochar yields a product that has promise as a soil amendment and a means of stabilizing and sequestering carbon for decades.

I began working with biochar as a student intern at the Kerr Center in the summer of 2010. During that time I researched, built, and used a simple biochar retort to produce several small batches of biochar. It is being used to help build soil fertility on Kerr's organic horticulture project. Biochar production is expected to be an on-going project of the Kerr Center.

While biochar has ancient origins, modern uses in agriculture are controversial. The following bibliography provides a brief look at what is known about biochar and touches on the pros and cons.

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A Brief Bibliography of Biochar

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