

WHAT IS COMPOSTING?

Composting occurs continually in nature as vegetation falls to the ground and slowly decays, maintaining healthy soil for new plant growth. Home composting duplicates this natural process, turning organic material such as yard debris and kitchen scraps into a rich soil amendment for yards and gardens. Home composters can accelerate the natural composting process by using just a few simple techniques!

WHY COMPOST?

Composting Saves Money. Garbage collection and disposal fees can be reduced. There is less need for expensive commercial fertilizers.

Composting Reduces Landfill Pollution. Composting turns yard and garden waste into resources. Good compost is expensive to buy, but free for the making. Who said money doesn't grow on trees?

Composting benefits Plant and Soil. Adding compost to your garden...

- ✦ Keeps soil loose and well-drained
- ✦ Prevents soil compaction and erosion
- ✦ Supplies essential nutrients for healthy plant growth
- ✦ Stores moisture and nutrients in the soil
- ✦ Helps plants resist pests and diseases

Composting is easy and convenient - anybody can do it!



Design: Meacci Consulting
Graphic Design: Boderick C. Butler

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Four Easy Steps to Backyard Composting



HOW TO COMPOST

Composting is as easy as 1, 2, 3...4! These four easy steps will work for any type of compost bin or pile. In addition to composting, there are other ways to reduce the amount of organic waste you send to the landfill.

- Leave grass clippings on the lawn after mowing.
- Use grass clippings, prunings, and leaves as mulch.
- Try worm bin composting.
- Bury vegetable and fruit scraps directly in your garden (12"-18" deep).



Getting Started

The ideal location for your compost pile is a spot that is:

- Convenient and easy to access
- Close to a water source
- On a level surface with good drainage - no standing water

Compost can be stacked in a loose pile, but many people prefer bins because they are neater, use space more efficiently, and help shield materials from pests.

Bins can be made from old pallets, lumber, mesh fencing, or cinder blocks. Bins need to allow air to reach the pile and open for easy turning and compost removal.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Pile won't heat up... add more water and green material. Turn pile. Increase the pile size (minimum size: 3x3x3)

Even if your pile is not hot, materials are still breaking down and will eventually compost.

Pile too dry... add more water and turn.



Gathering Materials

Select and mix the right stuff.

Greens

Energy Materials

Grass clippings/Weeds (without seed heads)
Vegetable/Fruit scraps
Manure & Bedding Yard trimmings

Browns

Bulking Agents

Wood chips · Sawdust
Dry leaves · Straw · Paper

Other Materials

Tea/Coffee ground and filters · Egg/Nut shells ·
Hair/Fur · Dryer lint

DO NOT COMPOST

Diseased plants · Weed seeds · Meat scraps ·
Animal fats/bones · Cat/Dog/Pig wastes · Vegetable
oils · Dairy products · Plastic/synthetic fabrics

Mix greens and browns well. Add fresh materials to the center of the pile. Bury vegetable and fruit scraps within the pile to discourage pests. Cut, chop, or grind materials into small pieces. Coarse, woody materials break down slowly and make the pile harder to turn.



Making Compost

Water

Add during and after mixing to maintain sufficient moisture content. The pile should not be soaked, but well-watered to the consistency of a wrung-out sponge. Inadequate moisture content is the most common composting problem. The pile can be covered to retain moisture.

Air

Good air circulation aids the composting process. Move materials frequently from the bottom to the top, and/mix in bulking agents. Monthly turning can produce compost in about 5 months. Weekly turning produces compost in about 2 months.



Reaping Rewards

Use compost as a soil conditioner, mulch, or top dressing. Compost improves soil and helps retain moisture. Use it in your yard, garden or for potted plants.

Compost is ready for use when it is a dark, rich color and broken into small pieces. Sift through a 1/2" screen, returning oversized materials back to the compost pile for further decomposition.

*For more information contact
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