

COMPOST BASICS: It's RECYCLING

Composting turns food and yard materials into a natural amendment for the soil. Compost is a valuable resource that is easy to make in your own backyard.

1 COLLECT MATERIALS TO COMPOST

Composting needs both:
"Green" nitrogen-rich materials and
"Brown" carbon-rich materials.

GOOD TO ADD TO COMPOST

"Greens"

- ✓ Vegetables 
- ✓ Fruits 
- ✓ Fresh grass clippings
- ✓ Green leaves 
- ✓ Fresh garden/yard debris 
- ✓ Coffee grounds
- ✓ Tea bags 
- ✓ Manure (plant eaters only)

"Browns"

- ✓ Brown leaves 
- ✓ Old grass clippings
- ✓ Old garden/yard debris
- ✓ Straw 
- ✓ Paper, cardboard
- ✓ Sawdust (untreated-small amount)

DO NOT ADD TO COMPOST

- ⊗ Meat and bones
- ⊗ Fats, oils, grease
- ⊗ Dairy products
- ⊗ Pet or human waste
- ⊗ Whole branches
- ⊗ Charcoal ash

2 PILE IT IN A COMPOST BIN

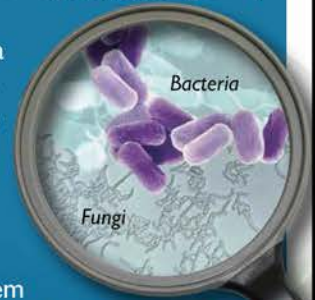
A compost bin stores the green and brown materials while they decompose into compost. Alternate layers of browns and greens at a ratio of 3:1. Water each layer. Top layer should always be brown.



Look closely at the variety of compost bins displayed here to see which style best meets your needs and budget.

3 TURN THE PILE AND ADD WATER

Helpful bacteria and fungi break down materials into compost. To survive, they need:



Food: Feed them balanced green and brown materials.



Water: Keep the pile as damp as a wrung out sponge



Oxygen: Turn the pile to provide more air circulation. (see "Hot or Cool?" box on other side)

4 Harvest your COMPOST!

Depending on your pile, it can take 3 months to 2 years for compost to be made. Finished compost is dark brown, crumbly, and smells like earth.



Add compost to give your garden, lawn, and potting soil a boost.

FIND MORE COMPOSTING INFO AND PRINTABLE GUIDES ONLINE AT



COMPOST: A LIVING SYSTEM

Microbes are the workers of your compost pile. Keep the bacteria and fungi happy and they will work to make compost faster.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Too Dry

Q: How do I know?

A: Crackles to touch. Keep your pile as damp as a wrung out sponge.



This compost needs more brown material.

Too Moist

Q: How do I know?

A: It may be smelly and attracting bugs. Turn pile, add more browns/carbon sources to absorb excess moisture and allow oxygen to circulate. Remember 3 parts brown to 1 part green.

COMPOST USES

- **Mulch:** Add 2-3 inches to top of soil around plants, trees, and shrubs. Reduces weeds and retains moisture.
- **Soil Amendment:** Dig 1-2 inches into top 4-6 inches of soil. Improves soil structure, retains moisture and adds nutrients.
- **Potting Mix:** Add 25% compost. Stores moisture and provides nutrients.
- **“Compost Tea:”** Steep bag of compost in water, aerate, and spray on plants. High dose of nutrients.
- **Lawn Top Dressing:** Screen to 1/2 inch. Spread over lawn. Brings soil to life.

Our gardens are enriched with compost made here every year.



BENEFITS OF COMPOSTING



- Improves soil health
- Reduces water needs
- Saves money
- Reduces fertilizer and pesticide use
- Slows erosion
- Suppresses some plant diseases
- Reduces taxes by cutting transportation and handling costs. Manage at the source.

HOT OR COOL?

HOT PILE



Build all at once as a batch, watering each layer. Microbes will multiply. Pile heats up to 132-140° F. Turn weekly so each part of pile gets hot and kills weeds, seeds, and most diseases. Produces compost in 6-12 weeks.

COOL PILE



Build as you get materials. Top layer is always browns. Turn and water when you can. Produces compost in 12-24 months.

Don't add noxious weeds, seeds, or diseased plants. Stockpile some fall leaves so they are available in summer to combine with the greens when carbon sources are harder to find. 