



FACT SHEET

Smart Solutions for Reducing Waste

Composting at Home

***You work hard on your yard, get the most out of it.
Composting reaps rewards by recycling yard waste.***

There's a great feeling when you can step back as a homeowner and admire all the hard work that you've put into your yard. Then again, there's that sinking feeling when you realize there's a lot of clean up ahead. Why not simplify the clean up and get a reward for your hard work? Compost your yard waste! It is kind to the environment, it creates organic fertilizer, and it saves you from having to stuff all those paper bags for curb side collection. The resulting natural fertilizer enriches your flower beds and garden, it reduces the waste stream, and saves you money. Nature provides the recyclers (microorganisms), you just put them to work.



Recipe for Compost

1. Green materials; Grass clippings, weeds, non woody prunings, fruit and vegetable scraps, withered flowers, blood meal, or cottonseed meal.
2. Brown materials; Dry leaves, sawdust, pine needles, woody garden prunings, brush, wood chips, corn cobs, any dead brown plants, and manure.
3. First layer; Air circulation. A 3-to-4 inch layer of chopped brush or the cross layering of twigs placed on the soil.
4. Second layer; A mixture of grass clippings, plants or weeds blended with dry leaves, sawdust, or wood chips. This layer should be 6-to-8 inches.
5. Third layer; Soil or mature compost about 1 inch thick to introduce microorganisms to the pile.
6. Fourth layer; A 2-to-3-inch layer of manure or fertilizer. Dust this layer with lime or wood ash to cut the acidity in the pile.
7. Repeat layers; Your pile should be 3-to-4 feet high or even with the top of the bin. Keep the pile moist, but not soggy.

Compost Systems

There are many ways to compost. How you go about getting the job done will depend upon where you live and the amount of space you have available. In general the size needs to be large enough to generate heat, but small enough for good air flow. Try to locate your compost pile/bin near your garden for convenience. Also place it within reach of your hose. It is best to shelter the pile from high winds and place it away from wooden structures.

The heap, mound or pile; Simply gather your materials in a heap or pile on the ground. To generate enough heat, make the pile five feet to six feet wide. The center should be four to six feet high.

Garbage can or bin; A garbage can, or a commercially designed compost bin is a bit more compact but does a great job. In these cases you'll have to cut, chop or shred your materials to size. If you use a garbage can, punch 24 to 48 quarter inch holes in the can. Make sure the holes are no closer than three inches to the top of the can. Mix the materials every three days to help with decomposition and to cut down on odors.

Portable wood & wire bins; Make your bins three feet high by three feet wide with an open top and bottom. Build your wall frames using 2x4 pressure treated lumber. Staple chicken wire or one half inch hardware cloth to those frames and assemble your frames to form a bin. Use three inch galvanized butt hinges and a hook and eye latch system to allow you to open and close the front.

Turning bins; This system is for those with large amounts of yard waste. A series of three bins allows the serious composter to make lots of organic material quickly. It involves turning the materials on a weekly basis. Fill one bin with yard waste, scraps & soil. As that material decomposes, fill the second bin & turn it weekly. Use the third bin to store collected waste until full. When number three is full, compost in number one should be ready.

Trouble Shooting Your Compost

Odor Problems; Your pile is not getting enough oxygen. Turn the pile often. Your pile may be too wet as well. Add leaves or wood chips to soak up the excess moisture. You may also have more green items than brown.

Center of pile is dry, coarse material; There is not enough water for decomposition. Add water and turn the pile. You can also cover the pile with plastic to retain moisture.

Compost is damp and warm only in the middle; The pile is too small. Add new material and mix it with the old.

Pile is attracting animals; Keep meats, bone, and other fats out of the pile or enclose the pile with metal or hardware cloth. Bury fruits & vegetables deep in the pile.

Pile is pure black, soggy & smelly; There is too much moisture and not enough air. Add sawdust and turn the pile.

Pile is grayish yellow in color; Your pile is water-logged. Add sawdust and fresh soil and mix.

Pile has matted layers; There is too much of one material in one layer. Break up the matted layers with garden spade or fork. Vary the amount of materials in each layer.

Large undecomposed items; The material was too large when it was added to the pile. Screen out the clumps and break them up to start the next compost

Need Help Getting Started?

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