

Why Compost?



Compost is finished when it is dark brown with a soil-like consistency. It will have a sweet musty smell (not rotten). The time required to make compost will depend on composition and pile temperature. It typically takes between six weeks to one year to mature.

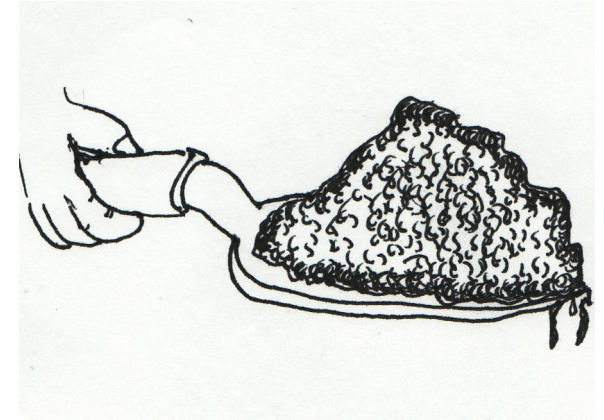
Micro-organisms in the organic matter work with bacteria, fungi and insects to break down the materials and convert them into useful soil. When we make compost from our household food and yard debris, we divert this material from the landfill, create materials to enrich our garden soil, and grow produce with more vitamins and minerals than commercial produce. Composting helps reduce our ecological footprint, helps our environment, and increases the flavor and goodness of our food!

1. *Health Benefits:* composting your garden increases the nutrients in the soil. These vitamins are absorbed into the produce, which get absorbed by your body. Fresh, organically grown produce is healthier and more flavorful!
(Quality Low Input Food Project, E.U.)
2. *Drought Protection:* helps the soil hold in moisture, also reducing the need for watering.
3. *Soil Aeration:* improves soil structure by creating air pockets, which helps water drain and roots grow.
4. *Erosion Protection:* the better the soil quality, the better defended against erosion.
5. *Gradual-Release Nutrients:* compost seeps through the soil and as the season warms, different nutrients are released, helping plants throughout their lives.
6. *Disease Prevention:* compost is more effective than oil-based chemical fertilizers in combating disease.
7. *Environmental Benefits:* by reducing your garbage, you reduce the impact you have on the environment. This small step can help communities have less landfills, less pollution, and help deter climate change. Compost helps turn problems into solutions and trash into treasure!

*Healthy Soil = Healthy Food
= Healthy People!*

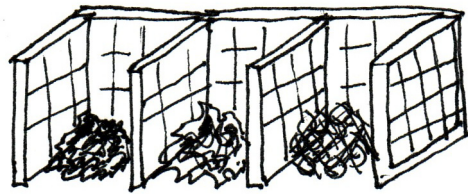
The Key to Composting

Making your own Topsoil Treasure



An Informational Guide
Brought to you by
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Compost is decomposed organic matter, made from garden and kitchen waste and rich in nutrients for gardens. Vegetables are only as healthy as the soil they were grown in. By making your own compost, you can grow healthier produce, reduce your yard and kitchen waste and improve your garden soil.



Tools Needed:

- Bin system: a bin can be made out of anything: wire, hay bales, or old wooden pallets. There are also commercial plastic bins available to purchase through hardware stores. A three-bin system works best for gardeners. The first bin is actively used to pile compostable items, the second bin is for partially composted items (move bin one to bin two once it reaches three feet in height). The third bin is for mature compost, ready to add to your soil. It can be helpful for busy gardeners to have a separate pile for large garden debris that takes longer to break down. Otherwise, all garden debris must be chopped into small pieces.
- D-handled pitch fork: perfect for adding stuff and turning the pile, or transferring compost.
- Wheelbarrow
- Screen: it helps to sift out the larger pieces before adding compost to your garden bed.
- Hose: compost piles need to be moist, like a damp sponge. Use the hose to remoisten it, helping quicken decomposition.

What Can Be Composted?



Greens

Kitchen Scraps: collect scraps in a covered container. Nearly all kitchen waste (veggie and fruit bits, eggshells, coffee grounds) can be collected. **NO MEATS, DAIRY, FATS OR OILS.**

Grass Clippings and Garden Debris: after mowing the lawn, rake the clippings onto a tarp, and haul it over to the compost! Mix them in well! Garden prunings and young weeds may also be collected. Use a small bucket to collect garden debris when you visit your plot. Weeds and diseased plants need to be completely removed from the garden to protect future crops. Weeds, unless the compost pile is hot, may still have viable seeds. Adding weeds to a cold compost may increase the problem. **NO DISEASED PLANTS, NO WEEDS THAT HAVE GONE TO SEED.**



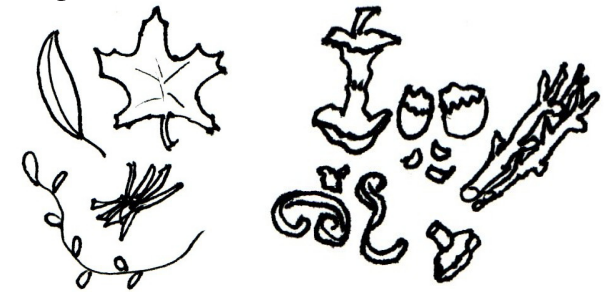
Browns

Shredded Paper and Sawdust: newspapers, computer or notebook paper, can be shredded and added to the mix.

Leaves: Leaves contain twice the mineral content of manure, making it a supreme addition to your compost bin. Shredded leaves will breakdown faster, so run them through a shredder, or run a lawnmower over them.

The Fastest Way To Compost:

1. Mix dry browns and wet greens. Browns are another way of saying carbon-rich materials such as leaves, hay, sawdust and paper. Greens are nitrogen-rich things like kitchen and garden waste. The dry browns help make air pockets, making decomposition happen faster.
2. The Right Mix: use 25 parts browns to 1 part greens.
3. Chop and shred: smaller bits break down faster. Think small!
4. 3'x3'x3': this is the ideal size for a compost pile because it's large enough to get warm and small enough to turn with a pitch fork.
5. Water as needed: keep it moist like a damp sponge to help things break down faster.
6. Add air! Turning the pile, mixing, or even just stabbing the pile with a pitchfork helps create new air pockets, speeding up the process. The micro-organisms that help make compost need air to breathe.



The Lowdown on Manure: Beware of bacteria, such as e coli, that can thrive in manure, even at high temperatures. Beware that crops may absorb anti-biotic residue remaining in the manure. Find out where your manure is coming from and the diet and health of the animals. Age manure for 2 years before applying to your garden. **NO DOG OR CAT WASTE.**