



Composting Basics

Compost is decayed organic matter that is used as a soil amendment in gardens and soil mixes. It improves drainage and adds nutrients.

Compost can be produced by accumulating waste materials, like grass clippings, leaves and garden refuse in a loose pile. The more usable way is to confine materials in a bin; and the most efficient size is 3-5 ft. x 3-5 ft. That size allows the internal temperature to break down the organic matter best.

- 1) Location: sheltered, shady area — probably in a back corner, although proper composting doesn't smell.
- 2) Bin needs to have drainage and air flow. Many commercial bins are available or one can be made from a square of pallets or a cylinder of chicken wire.
- 3) Size — 3-5 ft. diameter

What to compost

- Brown Waste - chipped wood, leaves, bark, straw, paper, dried foliage
- Green Waste - grass clippings, fruit and vegetable peels, raw vegetables, egg shells, coffee grounds

What NOT to compost

- Vegetation treated with pesticides (like lawn clippings treated with weed killers)
- Diseased plant parts
- Cat or dog manure
- Animal bones, meat or dairy products

How to get started

Layer: 1— 2-3" of manure, compost, dirt or sand
 2 — brown waste
 3 — green waste

Alternate these elements in 2-6" layers, depending on the coarseness of the materials, leaving a "dish" shape in the top layer for water to soak in.

The compost pile needs to be moist, but not soggy, so it may need to be watered in warm weather.

Many people use 2 piles or bins so one can be composting while finished compost can be used from the other. Compost should be ready in 4-6 months.

For quicker results, 4-6 weeks rather than months:

- use finely shredded materials
- add a compost maker enzyme or garden fertilizer to jump start the decomposing microbes
- turn the compost pile frequently by slicing through the layers and turning them inside out
- use a commercial "tumbling" composter.

Compost Bin Layering

