



BACKYARD COMPOSTING 101



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WHY? Compost is the gift we give back to the Earth. Lots of residents compost their food scraps and garden waste to recycle them into what gardeners call their "Black Gold". From its name, you can guess it's got an earthy smell, and is chock-a-block full of nutrients to refurbish your soil. Composting closes the loop on the life cycle: we start with seeds and grow food, which we harvest and eat, then we return unused portions to the Earth to be decomposed and help start the process again by nourishing the next season's soil, seeds and plants.

Step 1

FIND YOUR LOCATION

Find a location that is convenient for you to get to on a daily basis but is not too close to your home. A hard to reach compost bin is a bin hardly used. Set-it up in a shady to partly shady spot. 5' x 5' area is sufficient.

Step 2

PICK A "BIN"

Build a square bin out of 4 wood pallets. Build a circular wire mesh bin. Dig a pit. Buy a compost bin or a rotating sphere.

Step 3

COLLECT MATERIALS

Identify an area and container in your kitchen that you can collect acceptable food scraps for your home compost.

Step 4

ADD GREENS AND BROWNS

Start your compost pile with some soil and a little finished compost. Water lightly then add food scraps. For every 1" of "greens" add 3" of "browns." Turn your pile every few days. Add water as needed. The pile should be as wet as a wrung sponge.

GREENS

ANY FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SCRAP, EGG SHELLS, COFFEE GROUNDS AND FILTER, TEA BAGS (REMOVE THE STAPLE)

BROWNS

LEAVES, SAW DUST, UNTREATED WOOD CHIPS, HAY, NEWSPAPER

NO

MEATS, CHEESES, BONES, FISH, DAIRY, PET WASTE, FATS AND OILS, WEEDS, GRASS TREATED WITH HERBICIDES, INVASIVE PLANTS



BACKYARD COMPOSTING FAQ



HOW DO I KEEP ANIMALS AWAY?

If you stick to the 'rules' of what you can and cannot put in your bin, turning, etc. you won't have to worry about critters coming into your yard to dig up last night's leftovers, and you won't create any unpleasant odors wafting around your neighborhood.

MY COMPOST SMELLS!

If it smells like rotten eggs it's too wet. Turn the pile and add more browns to absorb excess moisture.

CAN I ADD GARDEN CLIPPINGS?

Certain plants should NOT go into your compost. Invasive plant species – including rhizomes (roots that travel horizontally underground); stolons (like rhizomes, but growing on top of the ground); tubers; root fragments; seeds. The same is true for weeds that have gone to seed: if you prefer to not see them again in your gardens – leave those out of your compost.

MY COMPOST IS TOO WET?

Turn your pile and add in more dry material.

MY COMPOST IS TOO DRY?

Turn the pile and add water. You may also need to consider if you are in too sunny of location. If so, adding water may need to happen more frequently.

CAN I COMPOST IN THE WINTER?

Yes, you can continue to add to your compost pile during the winter months. You can also experiment with vermicomposting indoors or participate in a food scrap pick up service or municipal drop off service until the spring season returns.

PRO-TIP

Start a leaf pile next to your compost bin so you have "browns" at the ready every time you add your "greens."