

WHAT IS COMPOSTING

Composting is a controlled process of decomposition of organic material. Naturally occurring soil organisms recycle nitrogen, potash, phosphorus, and other plant nutrients as they convert the material into humus.

GREEN high nitrogen ingredients

Plants:

weeds, flowers, seaweed, grass.

Food Waste:

fruits & vegetables, coffee grounds, tea bags, eggshells.

HOME COMPOSTING



BENEFITS OF COMPOSTING

Reduces the volume of garbage requiring disposal.

Saves money for you and your community in reduced soil purchases and disposal costs.

Enriches the soil.

Using compost adds essential nutrients and improves soil structure. Plants love compost!

BROWN high carbon ingredients

Dry Leaves

Straw & Cornstalks

Paper & Cardboard:

paper towels, napkins, bags, plates, coffee filters, tissue, and newspaper.

Wood Chips & Saw Dust

Pine Needles

Dryer Lint

A Guide for Composting Yard and Food Waste



WHAT TO COMPOST

Food waste (such as fruits, and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds), and yard waste (such as leaves, grass clippings and weeds), make excellent compost.



MIXING BROWNS & GREENS

If you don't have "brown" and "green" materials on hand at the same time, build your pile with "browns" and mix in "greens" as they become available.



HOW TO USE COMPOST

To make top soil:

Apply one-half to three inches of finished compost and mix it in with the top four inches of soil about one month before planting.

To make potting soil:

Mix equal parts compost, sand and loam. You may put the compost through a screen to remove large particles-these can go back into the pile.

WHAT NOT TO COMPOST

Meat, bones, and fatty food waste:

Including cheese, grease, and oils, dog and cat litter, to keep animals and odors out of your pile.

Invasive weeds and diseased plants

Compostable plastic bags and utensils:

Requires high temperatures to breakdown that home composting, in most cases, cannot provide.

TIPS

- When the composted materials look like rich, brown soil, it is ready to use!
- Compost can be applied as a top dressing in the garden throughout the summer.
- Compost is excellent for reseeding lawns and it can be spread one-quarter inch deep over the entire lawn to rejuvenate the turf.

TYPES OF COMPOST BINS

Earth Machine

Rodent-resistant bins distributed through Mass DEP's recycling grant program and are very commonly used home composters.



Wire bin

Wire bins can also be made for composting.



Barrel bin

These bins can easily be made from plastic garbage barrels.



New Age Bin

The New Age composter, provided by the Mass DEP, is good for yard waste, larger gardens, and grass clippings.



Turning Bin

A series of three or more bins allows you to make compost in a short time by turning the materials on a regular schedule.



MAKING A COMPOST PILE

1. CREATING THE COMPOST BIN can be made of wire, wood, pallets, concrete blocks, or garbage cans with drainage holes drilled in them. In urban areas, rodent-resistant compost bins with a secure cover and openings; no wider than one-half inch must be used. Check to see if your community has a compost bin distribution program, or purchase one at a nursery or hardware store. Enclosed compost piles keep out pests and retain heat and moisture.

2. SET UP THE BIN in a convenient, shady area with good drainage. A pile that is 3ft. wide and 3ft. high will maintain the heat generated by the composting organisms throughout the winter. However, a smaller pile will still compost even if it does not retain the desired heat.

3. START THE PILE by adding alternating layers of "brown" and "green" materials and mix them together. Maintain 3:1 ratio of browns to greens! Sprinkle with soil every 12 inches. Be sure to bury food scraps in the center of the pile.

4. ADD WATER as you build the pile if the materials are dry. Keep the composting material damp or it will not decompose.

5. AS TIME GOES ON keep oxygen available to the microorganisms by fluffing the pile with a compost turning tool each time you add the material. More frequent turning will shorten the composting time.

Composting without a yard: Vermicomposting

Composting can be done indoors by using worms and microorganisms (which are present in all kinds of composting) to transform kitchen and yard waste into nutrient-rich humus that can be used to help plants grow.



