

Composting

Instead of sending yard trimmings and vegetable scraps to the landfill, turn them into a valuable resource in your own back yard! Composting is easy to do, inexpensive and will help you build a strong and healthy garden. Compost provides nutrients and improves the quality of clay or sandy soil. You can also use it as mulch to control weeds and save water.



WHAT IS COMPOST?

It is a rich dark crumbly mixture of decomposed organic matter (like grass clippings, leaves, small twigs) and organisms. Together bacteria, fungi and protozoa, centipedes and millipedes, beetles and worms work together to break down the organic materials. Compost is so good for your garden because it is full of nutrients and its texture aerates the soil. These qualities open up clay soil by adding air pockets and add moisture retaining organic matter to sandy soils. All this helps plant roots get the nutrients and water they need!

WHAT CAN YOU COMPOST?

In general, smaller items compost faster. Use a chopper or shredder to reduce the size of items in the compost. Layering different types of material creates the best balance for decomposition. Moist material like grass clippings can be mixed with dry matter like straw. The composting process can be accelerated by adding Dr. Earth Organic Compost Starter. This product jump-starts the composting process by providing essential nitrogen.

Yes! – Green Items (One Part)

- Fresh grass clippings
- Green leaves
- Plant stems/stalks
- Hedge trimmings
- Annual weeds without seeds
- Vegetable and fruit scraps
- Coffee, filters and tea bags

• Brown Items (Two parts)

- Old potting soil
- Dried grass, leaves and twigs
- Shredded newspaper
- Straw
- Wood chips
- Sawdust

No! Best Not to Add These Items to the Compost

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Diseased plants * Invasive weeds—such as morning glory * Grease, cooking oil or oily foods * Dairy products | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Weeds with seeds on them * Meat or fish scraps * Pet waste |
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DON'T FORGET THE AIR AND WATER!

Because your compost is a collection of living organisms, it needs water and air to complete the process. Keep your compost lightly damp – about as moist as a wrung out sponge. Too much water (or rain) will slow down or even stop the composting process and can create odors. It's easiest to manage moisture levels if you have a cover for your bin. Oxygen is essential too. Encourage air circulation by turning compost regularly. A pitch fork will work for a large pile. In a tighter area, use the Compost Aerator (Yard Butler) – its folding wings allows you to get to the bottom of the pile and mix the compost thoroughly.



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HOW DO I CONTAIN ALL THIS GOOD STUFF?

There are two main ways to “contain” your compost. If you have plenty of room, a bin (or bins) can be made. Wire mesh, old fencing or wood can be re-purposed and combined to build a bin – 3' x 3' is a good minimum size. Allow for plenty of air movement around the bin and room for it to grow to about 3 feet tall. If you have limited space or have problems with critters in the area – try using a pre-fabricated bin such as the Metro Composter or Urban Compost tumbler.



Urban Compost Tumbler

The Urban Compost tumbler is the fastest method for making finished compost. With regular attention, it takes just two months. It's a good bin to use for kitchen scraps because it is animal proof. Just remember to layer moist materials with dry leaves or other dry material. If you want more organic matter to compost, try growing a cover crop such as fava beans or red clover in your veggie beds over the winter. In spring, add the plants to your bin for fast and nutritious compost.



Metro Composter

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN IT'S DONE?

Compost is finished when the components are unrecognizable. The finished color is dark brown and has a slight sweet, earthy scent. Uses include: incorporating it into the hole when planting new or transplanted plants, amending existing soil, as a compost tea (place several handfuls into a gallon of water, let sit for a few hours then stir and apply as a mild fertilizer to the soil), use it as a mulch, a top dressing for houseplants, or an ingredient in potting soil. Your plants will love it!