

COMPOSTING

- HELPFUL TIPS AND GUIDELINES FOR COMPOSTING -

Why Compost?

Many refer to composting as turning your unwanted garbage into gold, due to the fact that it saves space in landfills, improves soil quality naturally and helps to conserve natural resources.

Composting also:

SAVES YOU MONEY

it decreases the amount of garbage you dispose of and reduces/eliminates the need for store-bought fertilizers.

IMPROVES SOIL QUALITY

...it is a natural way to improve the health and fertility of your soil.

REDUCES WATER

...it helps to reduce the amount of water runoff by allowing the soil to retain moisture and require less watering cycles.

HELPS TO GROW HEALTHY VEGETATION

including flowers, lawns, vegetables and fruits.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN COMPOST

1



Select area in your yard that receives partial sun only, and is at least 3' x 3'.

2



Use a pitchfork or shovel and break open the ground where the compost pile will be located. This allows the microorganisms access the food they need to begin the composting process.

3



TIP: Finely chop materials for your compost pile, as it helps to speed up the decomposition process.

Review the lists below for items to include and items to avoid in your compost. Be sure to have a mixture of 4 to 6 inch layers of chopped carbon and nitrogen materials.

4



Include a handful of garden soil on the top layer of your initial mixture to help introduce the decomposing bacteria to the pile.

5



Water layers until they feel like a damp sponge.

6



Build your carbon and nitrogen layers, including a handful of garden soil on each layer. Do this step before each watering.

7



If your compost pile is in direct sunlight make sure to cover the top of the pile – either with black plastic or straw.

8



Turn, stir or mix your pile once a week. This will provide air channels. Use a garden fork or aerating tool to do this.

9



If you finely chop your carbon and nitrogen materials in your layers, add a little soil, and build the pile so that it is a minimum of 3 ft. high. The compost pile should be kept at a moisture level so that it is like a damp sponge.

In just 2 months your compost pile will be ready for gardening season!



FOOD WASTE COMPOST

DO INCLUDE:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Bread and grains
- Coffee grounds
- Eggshells
- Tea bags
- Paper towels, napkins, paper plates and small amounts of uncoated paper products

DO NOT INCLUDE:

- Meats or animal products
- Fish
- Chicken
- Dairy items – cheese, butter, yogurt, ice cream, etc.
- Oily/greasy foods

YARD WASTE COMPOST

DO INCLUDE:

- Plant trimmings
- Manure – horse and chicken
- Grass clippings – free from herbicides
- Small twigs
- Leaves
- Straw
- Flowers and weeds
- Sawdust

DO NOT INCLUDE:

- Diseased plants
- Invasive weeds
- Noxious weeds
- Blackberries
- Animal feces (dog and cat)
- Morning Glory
- Dandelions
- Tansy
- Ragweed
- Roses
- Weed seeds/seedlings

HOW TO USE COMPOST MATERIALS

Your compost is ready for use when it is dark and crumbly and the materials have blended together.



For vegetables, annual and perennial flowers, and herbs:

add light mixture into the soil several times during the growing season.



For trees and shrubs:

after the soil at the base of the plant has been cultivated, spread 1-2 inches of compost around the drip line. Do not put compost mixture near tree trunk to prevent mice from burrowing there.



For lawns:

spread a thin layer of compost over freshly aerated grass.



For household plants:

add compost to potting soil, make sure to finely screen compost with a 1/4" screen.

COMPOST TROUBLESHOOTING

SYMPTOM	Possible Problem	Solution
Odors	Not enough air	Mix the pile
	Too wet	Mix the pile and extra sources of coarse carbon, such as shredded twigs, alfalfa meal or straw
	Too much high nitrogen material	Add extra sources of coarse carbon, listed above
Pile Doesn't Heat	Lacking nitrogen	Mix in extra high-nitrogen sources, such as grass clippings or bloodmeal
	Pile is too small	Add more compost materials until the pile is a minimum size of 3'x3'x3'
Center of Pile is Dry	Not enough water	Add water to moisten the pile as you add more materials to build the compost
Flies	Decaying food scraps	Make sure to bury food scraps deep in the compost pile.