



COMPOSTING



What is home composting?

- * Composting is nature's way of recycling organic waste from your yard and kitchen by breaking it down into soil-enriching humus.
- * Home composting is easy. It is simply a matter of taking the time to collect your organic waste and start an active compost pile. Once you get it going, nature will take its course with a little help along the way.

What are the benefits?

- * Turns yard and garden waste and fruit and vegetable scraps into a valuable soil conditioner.
- * Reduces the amount of garbage that you take to the curb and lessens yard and garden waste requiring disposal.
- * Extends the life of our landfill.

How does composting work?

- * In nature, organic wastes are broken down and recycled through a combination of biological and chemical processes. Biological agents like worms, insects, fungi, bacteria and other microorganisms consume and digest the materials releasing nutrients in the process. The humus which is produced is further transformed by the weather process.

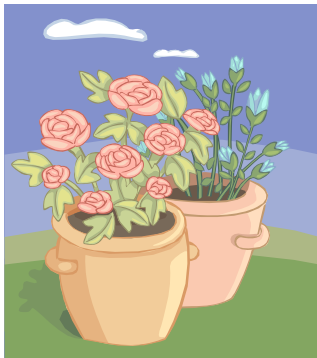
What can I compost?

- * Materials suitable for composting depend on the method you choose but generally include vegetable and fruit scraps, grass clippings, leaves, coffee grounds, tea and tea bags, egg shells, sawdust and wood ash. Bones, meat or fish, cooking oils, dairy products, grains or cereal, diseased plants or leaves and pet feces should not be composted as they will attract rodents and wildlife or contaminate your compost.



STEPS TO MAKING COMPOST

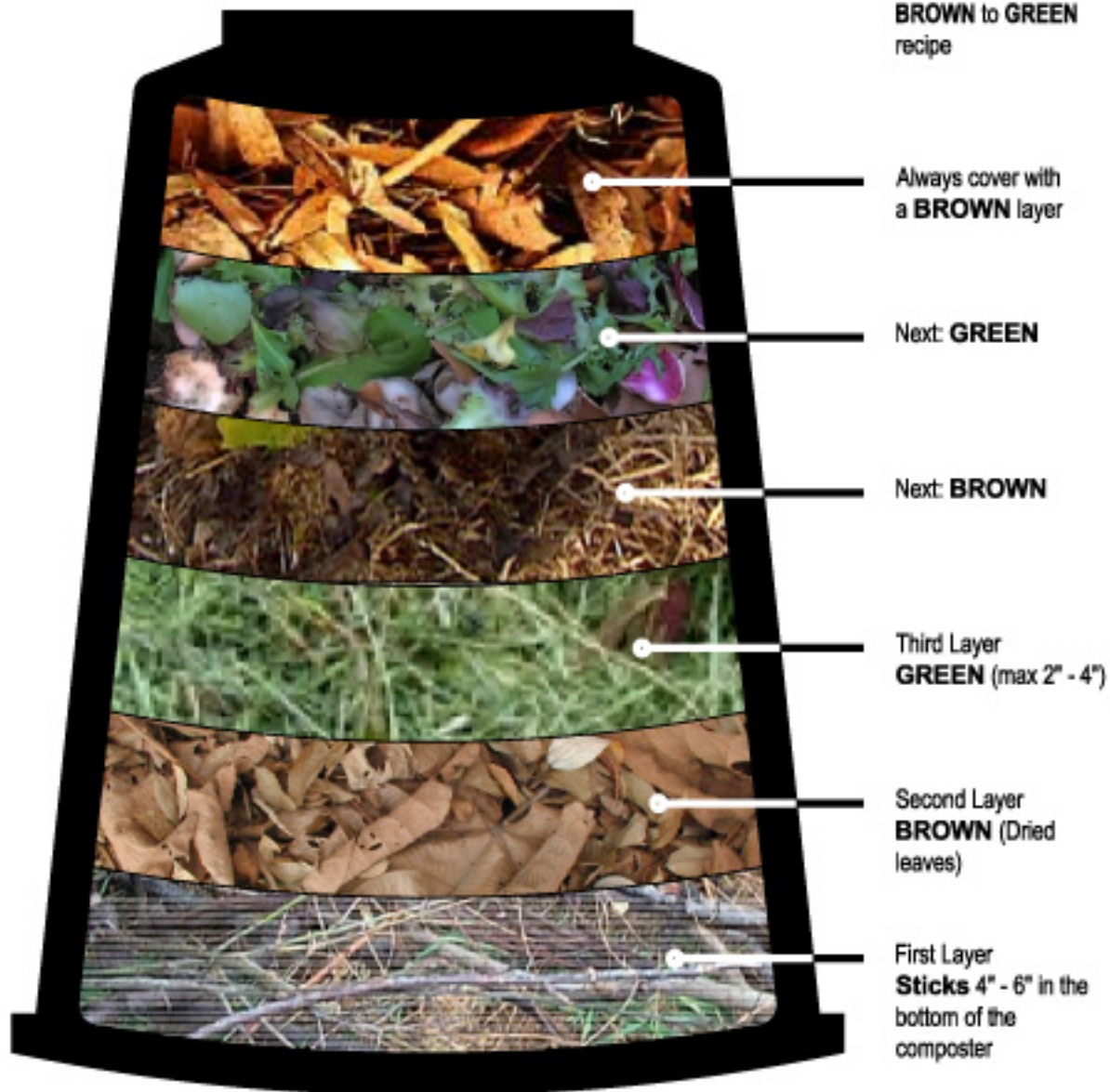
1. Choose a sunny site that is close to the kitchen.
2. Break up the soil around the area where you want to place the bin, and bury the bottom edge 3-5 centimetres underground.
3. The first layer should comprise of leaves, twigs and other dry compostable materials, such as shredded paper or cardboard. This provides aeration. Moisten this well.
4. Add a layer of **green** material, such as kitchen scraps, green leaves, grass clippings or spent cut flowers.
5. Follow with a **brown** layer – consisting of dry leaves, straw, or shredded newspaper. Brown materials should always be moistened after they are added.
6. Continue alternating **green** and **brown** layers over time until the bin is almost full, then cover with a 5 cm layer of garden soil or finished compost. This is important as it contains many beneficial microorganisms that help to speed up the composting process.
7. It is important to add air to the compost so it doesn't smell. This can be done by occasionally turning it with a garden fork or using a hanging basket hook, which is plunged into the compost and pulled out. It is not essential, but will speed up the process.
8. The compost will be ready in approximately 2-3 months. (Faster in summer, longer in winter). The compost is ready when it smells earthy, has a crumbly texture and there are no readily identifiable food products. Some materials that are not as readily compostable (such as straw, twigs, eggshells or corncobs) may be visible. These can either be placed aside for the next batch of compost, or allowed to break down fully in the garden.
9. Repeat, and enjoy the benefits of compost, while knowing you are helping reduce the amount of green waste going to landfill.



HOW TO USE YOUR COMPOST:

- Use instead of potting mix for planting seedlings.
- Encourage healthy plant growth by digging in a layer of compost around the drop line in trees.
- Compost can be applied twice a year to natives and as a top dressing for lawns.

A COMPOST RECIPE TO FEED YOUR SOIL.

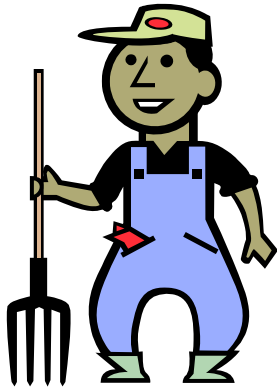


KEEP MOIST: As wet as a wrung out sponge.

AERATE: Air helps to speed up decomposition. Aeration should be done throughout the entire composting process.

KEEP COVERED: Use a compost lid, cardboard or canvas over top of your pile.

FIX-IT GUIDE



Smelly compost?

Your compost can start to smell if it gets too wet or if there is not enough air in the heap. A common cause is putting in too much food waste and not enough dry ingredients.

FIX IT!

Fork in dry leaves, garden mulch or straw.

Garden lime, dolomite or wood-fire ash added to the heap will also 'sweeten' it (lime reduces the acidity caused by excessive nitrogen-rich materials, which are green materials as per the steps to making compost)

Turn the compost to get more air in.

Combine green ingredients with sawdust or shredded newspaper before adding to the heap.

Compost should be about as wet as a wrung out sponge. To test, pick up a handful and squeeze firmly. Water should appear at the surface, but not form large drips.



Unwelcome visitors?

Ants, cockroaches, mice or rats can sometimes make your compost their home. Do not despair, there are millions of friendly creatures in your compost heap and some simple methods can get rid of the unwelcome ones.

FIX IT!

Always ensure food in the heap is covered, a layer of newspaper, mulch or soil can be used.

Adding lime and turning the heap discourages ants and cockroaches.

Avoid placing dairy products, meat and seafood in the compost.

Placing fine wire mesh under the compost bin will help keep out mice and rats.



Compost slow to mature?

If your compost system can't keep up with demand there are ways to make great compost quicker. A slow composting system can mean that the compost is not hot enough, or there may be not be enough air or water.

FIX IT!

Adding green material, in the form of animal manure (such as chicken or horse) or commercial products such as blood and bone, can speed up the composting process.

Turn the heap and add water.

Hint:

Small items will decompose faster. If possible, chop materials into pieces as small as possible. This will help to speed up the process. Use the lawn mower to chop up coarse garden pruning's

