



Back Yard Composting

Compost is a natural fertilizer and soil conditioner you can make at home from kitchen scraps and garden waste. Put in a pile they will decompose as nature intended. Both a hot (fast) and cold (slow) method can be used.

Why Composting is important

- Eliminates artificial fertilizer use
- Improve your soil and your garden
- Reduce the amount of food and garden waste put in landfill
- Reduce greenhouse gas production – food scraps in landfills they can produce methane

Ideal requirements for success

- The carbon–nitrogen ratio in a compost pile should be about 30:1 by volume. There are many suggested ratios, many 1:1 or 1:2.
- Temperature: In Fall compost activity slows, and when it freezes it stops. A good hot pile will have an internal temperature of over 44 C
- Oxygen: Aerobic (oxygen-loving) bacteria, do the work of decomposition.
- Moisture: Compost should be moist, but not wet

Uses of Compost

- Add to potting soil for indoor seed-starting. Use about a 3:1 ratio of potting soil to compost.
- Use as mulch to cover the soil (keeps soil moist, cool and protected and reduces germination of weed seeds). Also called top dressing, nutrients slowly filter into soil from the compost.
- Mix into soil to improve soil texture.
- Make compost tea (finished compost+ water+ several days=food for your plants)

Making your compost pile

- Select a site: sunny, well-drained location, 3 square feet is an ideal (minimal) size, generate enough heat for efficient decomposition.
- Build a bin (stakes and wire/ old pallets/ concrete blocks)
- The base layer: fill with sticks, bark, branches (allows good air flow)
- Alternate layers of green and brown materials
- Moisture: Lightly water the pile if necessary—compost ingredients should be damp, not soaking.
- Cover: The top layer should be by a thick carbon (brown) layer, or a physical lid. This will discourage critters from visiting.
- Some like to turn the pile from one area to another, stir it, or poke hole in it, to increase aeration.
- For the pile to be hot, ideally it should be filled to full depth in one session, if not it may not reach optimum temperature for fast decomposition.
- Monitor: regularly (or with each addition) check status of pile (should be shrinking, pleasant smell, slightly damp)
- Harvest from the bottom of the pile as the compost becomes ready

Sign of problems and how to fix it

- Unpleasant odor: Lack of air. Aerate the pile by turning it or poking holes in it
- Unpleasant odor: Nutrient imbalance (too much nitrogen) Add more carbon material
- 4 legged pests: Food left exposed. Bury food with a carbon layer or cover with a lid
- Nothing is happening?
 - Too dry. Add water
 - Too much carbon. Add green materials
 - Too cold. wait and / or move to a sunnier place

Cold Method of Compost

- Find an area to compost, either use an open pile or build a holding area like above
- Add yard waste and kitchen scraps as they occur, keep dried leaves on hand to cover food as necessary.
- No need to worry about turning or stirring.

https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/elg/environment/content/land_waste/content/composting.html

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Greens</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tea bags• Grass cuttings• Vegetable peelings, salad leaves and fruit scraps• Coffee grounds• Old flowers and nettles• Green plants and leaves	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Browns</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cardboard• Egg boxes and egg shells• Paper• Dried leaves• Twigs and branches• Sawdust and straw• Nuts
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COMPOST

DO NOT ADD:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meat• Fat trimmings• Animal skin trimmings• Oils• Bones• Diseased plants• Insect infested materials• Chemicals• Plastics• Inorganic materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baked Goods (cake, bread)• Heavily Coated or Printed Paper (magazines, catalogs, wrapping paper, etc.)• Human or pet feces• Dairy Products (cheese, milk, yogurt, etc.)
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Invasive weed roots
Weed seeds
Rhubarb leaves
black walnut
Diseased plants

