
Benefits of Composting

1. Saves Money & Landfill Space - According to the EPA, 94% of the food we throw away ends up in the landfill. For every pound of organic material composted at home, it is one less pound that must be collected, transported, and deposited in the landfill.

2. Saves Water - Compost reduces a plant's needs for water by increasing how much water can be held by the soil. Only a 5% increase in organic material quadruples the soil's water holding capacity. Additionally, when compost is added to bare soils as a thin layer, it will keep soil moisture from evaporating, a practice called top-dressing.

3. Reduces Methane Emissions from Landfills and Lowers Your Carbon Footprint - When you add organic matter to a landfill, the anaerobic (absence of oxygen) bacteria starts decomposing the waste. This type of bacteria produces 50% carbon dioxide and 50% methane (a greenhouse gas more powerful than carbon dioxide).

4. Enriches Soil - Compost provides soil with a vast number of beneficial microbes, such as bacteria and fungi, and the habitat that the microbes need to live. The microbes extract nutrients from the mineral part of the soil and eventually pass the nutrients on to plants.

5. Reduces the Need for Chemical Fertilizers - Compost is a rich source of nutrients and significantly reduces or eliminates the need for chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides.

Uses of Compost

Four ways to use compost in your yard or garden

1. A soil amendment
2. A moisture holding mulch
3. A top dressing for your lawn
4. Compost tea

Reduce Your Food Waste

The FDA suggests the following simple steps to reduce food waste and save money:

Planning & Shopping

- Preplan and write your shopping list before going to the grocery store. Think about what meals you will be preparing, and check your fridge to see what items you already have.
- When at the store, buy only what you need and stick to your list. Be careful when buying in bulk, especially with items that have a limited shelf life.

In the Kitchen & Storage Tips

- Use the "Foodkeeper App" for information on how to safely store different foods to maintain freshness and quality.
- Create a designated space in your fridge for foods that may go bad within a few days.
- Check your fridge often to keep track of what you have and what needs to be used. Eat or freeze items before you need to throw them away.
- Keep the temperature at 40° F or below to keep foods safe. The temperature of your freezer should be 0° F.
- If you have more food on hand than you can use or you need, consider donating to a local food pantry or a food drive.
- Learn about food product dating – Many consumers misunderstand the purpose and meaning of the date labels that often appear on packaged foods.

Cooking & Serving

- Be creative and have fun! Create new dishes and snacks with leftovers or items you think will go bad if not eaten soon.
- Follow the 2-Hour Rule. For safety reasons, don't leave perishables out at room temperature for more than two hours, unless you're keeping it hot or cold.
- Use serving size information on the Nutrition Facts label to help you portion meals or snacks.
- Prepared too much food for a party? Pack extras in containers for guests to take home or take some over to a neighbor as a nice gesture.



BACKYARD COMPOSTING GUIDE

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5 Easy Steps to Compost

1. Pick a Location - Place compost bin/pile in a convenient, partially sunny location with good drainage. You also want to place your bin on bare soil so bacteria and worms have direct access to your compostable materials.

2. Build or Purchase a Compost Bin - Compost bins can be purchased or built using wire, wood, wood pallets, or concrete blocks.



3. Start your Compost - Start compost with a layer of coarse materials such as corn stalks to build air passages. Add alternating layers of "brown" and "green" materials and mix them together (See "What to Compost"). The ideal ratio (Compost Recipe) for "brown" to "green" materials in a backyard bin is generally considered to be:

*3 parts brown to 1 part green
Or
6 inches browns to 2 inches of greens*

4. Water - Add water as you build your compost if the materials are dry. Compost should be damp, not wet. It should feel like a wrung-out sponge.

5. Oxygen - Mix or turn your compost. You can use a garden hoe or compost turning tool. More frequent turning will shorten the composting time.

Helpful Tips

- Keep it small. Mowing, grinding, chopping, or shredding will shorten the compost time.
- Always cover your newly added food scraps with brown materials or soil. This will help eliminate odors and control pests.
- Line the bottom of your compost bin or pile with 1/4" hardware cloth to limit access to your compost from mice or rodents.
- If your compost bin needs water, and the forecast calls for rain; remove the lid on your compost bin and let Mother Nature provide the water.

What to Compost

√ What's In

Green Materials (Nitrogen-rich)	Brown Materials (Carbon-rich)
 Fruits/Vegetables	 Twigs/Small Brush/ Woody Chips/Shavings
 Coffee Grounds/ Tea Leaves & Bags/ Eggshells	 Dried Leaves/Straw/ Dried Grass
 Grass Clippings Fresh/Green	 Coffee Filters Shredded Paper Paper Towels/Napkins

X What's Out

 Bread/Rice/Pasta	 Diseased/Infested Plants
 Dairy Products	 Glossy/Colored/Coated Paper
 Fats/Cooking Oil/ Grease	 Pet Waste/Cat Litter
 Meat/Fish/Bones	 Treated Wood

Problems/Causes/ Solutions

Problem	Possible Causes	Solutions
Damp and warm only in the middle of the pile	Pile could be too small or cold weather might have slowed compost	Compost piles should be at least 3' x 3'. Get more materials and mix old ingredients into a new pile.
Pile smells rotten and/or attracts flies	Too wet or non-compostables are present.	Turn, add dry, woody materials, cover pile from heavy rains, and/or remove grease, etc. and turn.
Stinks like rancid butter, vinegar, or rotten eggs	Not enough oxygen, pile is too wet or compacted, or non-compostables present.	Mix up the pile. Add coarse dry materials like leaves or straw.
Odor like ammonia	Not enough carbon	Add brown materials
Pile not composting	Too dry and/or too much browns	Moisten till slightly damp or turn and add green materials
Attracts rodents, flies, or other animals	Inappropriate materials like meat or oil, or the greens are too close to surface of the pile.	Bury greens near center of pile. Don't add non-compostables. Switch to rodent proof bin.
Fire ant problems	Pile could be too dry, not hot enough, or has kitchen scraps too close to surface	Make sure your pile has a good mix of materials to heat up, and keep moist enough.