

Compost Happens

If we just let it!

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#1 Tip

- get started!

- ❧ Composting can be as simple or as involved as you would like, how much GREEN and BROWN waste you have, how fast you want results, and the effort you are willing to invest.



Is it really all THAT important?

- ❧ We lost half of our essential topsoil in the last half of the 20th century due to modern agricultural practices
- ❧ 25% of what is remaining has been degraded by chemicals and poor farming practices that leach the nutrients and kill the microbes
- ❧ Much of our soil has lost its fertility



Better the soil, better the yield!

Plants are stronger with better soil!

Good Soil. Bad Soil.



Good soil is alive

Microbes are the bridge to the minerals and nutrients in the plant



Farm chemicals are killing the bacteria, fungi, and life that creates our living soil. Fungi and it's bacteria stimulates a plants immune system and is responsible for 30% of all humus growing

Poor soil = poor nutrition and taste



- ❧ Because of soil depletion, crops grown decades ago were much richer in vitamins and minerals than the varieties most of us get today
- ❧ Many chefs today seek organic produce because it tastes better too!



Compost to the rescue!



- ❧ Helps retain moisture
- ❧ Suppresses plant diseases and pests
- ❧ Reduces the need for chemical fertilizers
- ❧ Prevents erosion
- ❧ Increases productivity and profitability
- ❧ Increases nutrient value
- ❧ Stores nitrates and carbon
- ❧ Allows soil to breathe



Grandma's Famous Fail-Proof Compost Recipe

- ❧ Combine about equal parts of BROWNS and GREENS in a 3-4 foot diameter pile
- ❧ Keep moist -but not wet
- ❧ Make sure the microbial critters can breathe
- ❧ Mix it all up every now and then- more the better
- ❧ Wait for nature to cook in 6 weeks to 6 months
- ❧ When the material at the bottom is dark and rich in color, your compost is ready to use



Where to put the compost kitchen

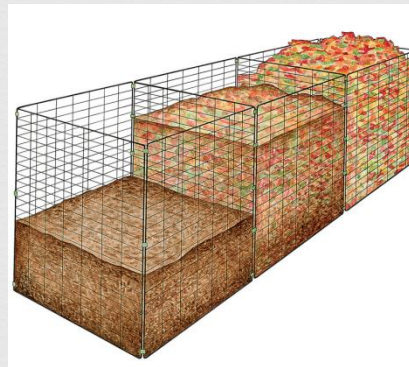
- ❧ Choose a level, well-drained site, preferably near your garden
- ❧ Easy access for large loads
- ❧ Open and semi shady
- ❧ Away from shallow roots
- ❧ Access to water



Bins or piles?

(only the neighbors really care)

☞ Three bin systems are ideal but piles work just as well



What are the BROWNS and GREENS?

BROWNS

- ❧ High carbon materials
- ❧ Sawdust
- ❧ Dried garden materials
- ❧ Hay/Straw
- ❧ Shredded paper and paper towels
- ❧ Dry leaves
- ❧ Wood chips

GREENS

- ❧ High nitrogen materials
- ❧ Vegetables and fruits
- ❧ Coffee grounds
- ❧ Manure from herbivores
- ❧ Compost or good soil
- ❧ Green weeds/grass

A word about water and air

- ❧ The pile should be moist but not saturated
- ❧ If pile is not heating up, check moisture it may be dry
- ❧ If pile smells bad, check moisture, it may be soggy and needing more air
- ❧ Moisten dry materials as they are added
- ❧ Cover top of compost with a tarp to keep it moist in dry weather but not soggy in the rain
- ❧ Aim for the moisture of a wrung out sponge



Work it (or not)



- ❧ Mix the pile with a pitchfork 1-2 times a week or month
- ❧ Once a 3-4 foot pile is achieved- flip it over completely and start a new pile- or leave it
- ❧ When the pile has “settled” to about 2/3 the size, and the temperature is going down, mix or flip it again (or not)



Cooking on high (if you care)

- ❧ The pile will heat up and then begin to cool
- ❧ Flip after the pile's internal temperature peaks at about 130 to 140 degrees Fahrenheit
- ❧ You can track with a compost thermometer, or reach into the pile to determine if it is uncomfortably hot to the touch



The ingredients



The Good

- œ Fruits and vegetables
- œ Eggshells
- œ Coffee grounds and filters
- œ Tea bags
- œ Nut shells
- œ Shredded newspaper
- œ Cardboard
- œ Paper towels/ shredded paper
- œ Yard trimmings
- œ Grass clippings
- œ Houseplants
- œ Hay and straw
- œ Horse manure and bedding
- œ Leaves
- œ Sawdust
- œ Wood chips
- œ Cotton and wool rags
- œ Dryer and vacuum cleaner lint
- œ Hair and fur
- œ Fireplace ashes

The Bad

- œ Black walnut tree leaves or twigs
- œ Coal or charcoal ash
- œ Dairy products and eggs
- œ Diseased or insect-ridden plants
- œ Fats, grease, lard, or oils
- œ Meat or fish bones and scraps
- œ Pet wastes (e.g., dog or cat feces, soiled cat litter)
- œ Yard trimmings treated with chemical pesticides

Where to get ingredients



- ❧ Homes
- ❧ Garden
- ❧ Restaurants
- ❧ Coffee shops
- ❧ Sawmill
- ❧ Bagged leaves
- ❧ Barns
- ❧ Public works
- ❧ Landscape and tree service



Using the final product



- ❧ Finished compost is about half the bulk of what you put into it
- ❧ It is dark and crumbly and smells sweet
- ❧ It is alive with worms and other happy critters
- ❧ It may still contain larger or tougher pieces that did not break down (just put back into the new pile)
- ❧ Compost is an excellent source of organic matter and can be used for all your planting needs.



The only way to fail is not to start!

- ❧ There is no wrong way to compost
- ❧ Six weeks or six months
- ❧ Fussy or lazy
- ❧ Either way it contributes to the bottom line of our mission- to sustainably grow as much of the best food we can!

