



Did You Know Composting Can...

Suppress plant diseases and pests.

Reduce or eliminate the need for chemical fertilizers.

Promote higher yields of agricultural crops.

Facilitate reforestation, wetlands restoration, and habitat revitalization efforts by amending contaminated, compacted, and marginal soils.

Remove solids, oil, grease, and heavy metals from stormwater runoff.

What to Compost - The IN List

- Cardboard rolls, Clean paper & Shredded newspaper
- Coffee grounds and filters, Tea bags
- Cotton rags
- Dryer and vacuum cleaner lint
- Eggshells
- Fireplace ashes
- Fruits and vegetables
- Grass clippings
- Hair and fur
- Hay and straw
- Houseplants
- Leaves
- Nut shells
- Sawdust
- Wood chips
- Wool rags
- Yard trimmings

What Not to Compost - The OUT List

Leave Out/Reason Why

- **Black walnut tree leaves or twigs** - Releases substances that might be harmful to plants
- **Coal or charcoal ash** - Might contain substances harmful to plants
- **Dairy products (e.g., butter, egg yolks, milk, sour cream, yogurt)** - Create odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies
- **Diseased or insect-ridden plants** - Diseases or insects might survive and be transferred back to other plants
- **Fats, grease, lard, or oils** - Create odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies
- **Meat or fish bones and scraps** - Create odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies
- **Pet wastes (e.g., dog or cat feces, soiled cat litter)** - Might contain parasites, bacteria, germs, pathogens, and viruses harmful to humans
- **Yard trimmings treated with chemical pesticides** - Might kill beneficial composting organisms

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 Town Supervisor
John Venditto

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What is Composting?

Composting is the oldest method for recovering resources through recycling. It is the natural, controlled process by which organic material such as leaves, twigs, grass clippings and vegetable food waste decays into a dark, crumbly substance called humus. This final product makes an excellent soil conditioner.

Composting can be done on an individual basis, right in your backyard or on a large scale. In the Town of Oyster Bay, leaves and yard debris are collected and brought to a central site. Composting is an environmentally sound and practical method for turning refuse into a valuable resource. Composting techniques can be used for grass clippings, leaves, twigs, branches and other yard waste.

Why Do It?

Compost is great for gardens and landscaping, and you can save money by buying less soil conditioner, mulch and fertilizer. Composting helps to keep the high volume of organic material out of our landfills and turns that material into a useful product. On-site composting reduces the cost of hauling garbage and operating landfills. On a townwide scale, it costs less to compost yard wastes than to collect and dispose of them. Communities can save money by using the finished compost as mulch or topsoil substitute in municipal landscaping projects.

Using compost is a time-honored tradition among home gardeners because it contains vital nutrients for plants. Adding compost can improve the quality of soil and increase water retention. The result is healthier plants, and savings from decreased water consumption.

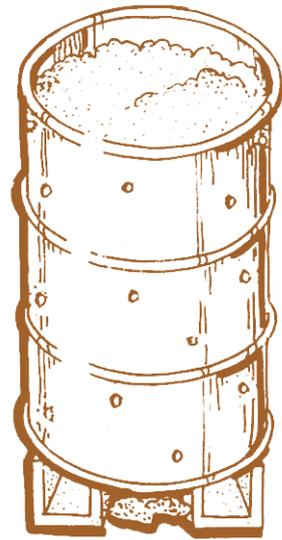
The Process

Composting speeds natural decomposition under semi-controlled conditions. Micro-organisms feed on organic materials and churn out humus — a process requiring moisture and oxygen. As microbes work, their activity causes temperatures within the pile to rise to as much as 160 degrees F., which speeds the process along and kills many diseases, organisms and weed seeds.

Your Own Backyard Project

You can compost right in your backyard in a homemade bin made of scrap wood, chicken wire, snow fencing or even old garbage cans (with holes punched in the sides and bottom).

Manufactured bins include tumbling units, hoops, cones and stacking bins; these can be purchased from retail or mail-order businesses.



Cut the bottom out of a trash can or a 55-gallon drum and elevate on cinderblocks for easy access to finished compost. Drilling many holes assists in aeration.

Any time of the year is the right time to begin a compost pile, but most people prefer autumn because of the abundance of leaves available.

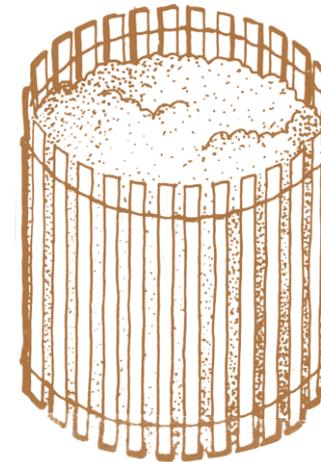
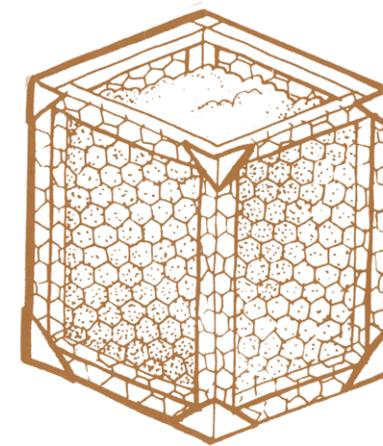
A holding bin will facilitate containment of the compost pile. Its size will depend on your needs, but a 5' long by 4' wide 3' high bin should suffice.

A simple bin can be built for relatively little money from chicken wire, scrap wood, snow fencing or cinderblocks. Place it in a convenient location and add grass clippings and leaves as they collect. Layering with top soil is recommended because it assists the decay process. Aerate the pile by turning every month or so with shovel or pitchfork. This provides ventilation and shifts materials from the outer edges of the pile to the center, where they are able to be heated and break down. Wet the pile thoroughly, but not to the point of soaking. This method will produce usable compost in from six months to two years.

Alternative Method

A quicker system calls for more turning, and one or two adjacent bins come in handy for this — just shift the compost from one bin to the another.

Wire mesh stretched on a wooden frame makes an effective bin.



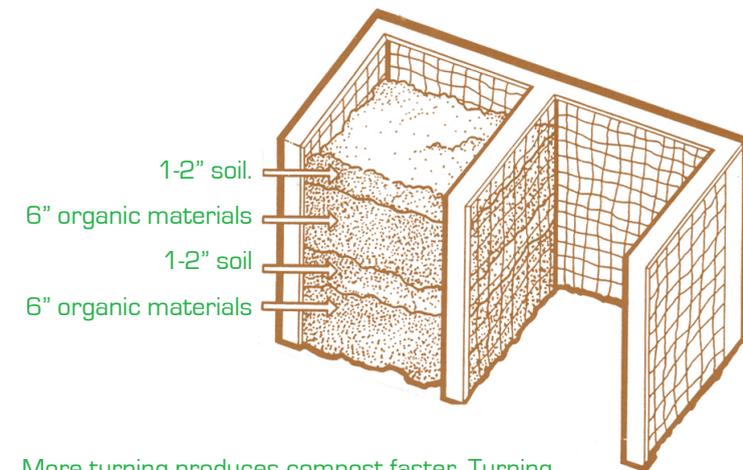
A simple bin of snow fencing is constructed by crimping the wire ends together to form a hoop.

Alternate a 6" layer of compostable yard wastes with 1" layer of garden soil. Repeat until the bin is almost full, wetting each layer thoroughly. Within a week, the center of the pile should be hot. Every few days turn the pile by shifting its contents into adjacent bin.

This method will produce usable compost in just a few months. When the material is uniform in color and texture and crumbly to the touch, you're ready to start gardening.

Composting Hints to Remember

- Nitrogen is essential to the composting process. Adding fertilizer containing nitrogen or manure assists in rapid decomposition;
- Shredding or chopping materials to be composted into small pieces also speeds up the decay process;
- Finished compost may be easier to use if it is first screened through a 1" wire mesh to eliminate materials that are not completely decomposed.
- Compost should be applied to soil in layers of from 1" to 3" in thickness. Mix it thoroughly into the soil of vegetable gardens and flower beds before and after planting.
- Covering the compost pile with plastic can help retain moisture and heat during the winter months. This will also protect the pile from becoming too wet when it rains, which may deplete the material of nitrogen.
- Frequent turning is not recommended in cold weather because it will allow too much heat to escape.



More turning produces compost faster. Turning is easier with adjacent bins—just shift the material from one to the other