

What To Compost

Your compost bin will work best if it is fed a diet of green (nitrogen-rich) and brown (carbon-rich) materials. Check out the list of kitchen and yard waste “greens” and “browns”.

KITCHEN “GREENS”

Fruit & vegetable scraps
Coffee grounds
Rice & pasta
Egg Shells



KITCHEN “BROWNS”

Coffee filters, stale bread
Paper napkins & towels
Hair



YARD “GREENS”

Vegetables
Plant trimmings
Hedge clippings
Grass (small amounts)



YARD “BROWNS”

Leaves
Straw or hay
Small twigs/chips
Dried grass and weeds



How To Compost

Composting is easy – it happens on its own. However, there are a few things you can do to speed up the composting process. Just follow these four steps:



CHOP

Chop up larger items like watermelon rinds or corn cobs before putting them in a container or directly into your compost bin.



Starter Mix

Start with a layer of dirt in the bottom of your compost bin. Add “greens” (egg shells, food scraps); cover with “browns” (napkins, leaves) and put cover back on container.

Mixture should be kept moist – like a damp sponge. Moisture and air are the key elements to a successful backyard composting program.



STIR

Mix the new material into the existing pile using a pitchfork or other garden tool. This also adds oxygen, a key component to successful composting.



COVER

Cover your food waste with a handful of old leaves, other dried yard waste or soil. This will add carbon and reduce the chance of odors and fruit flies. Then put the lid back on and let it “cook”.

Harvesting Your Compost

After a few months, the kitchen scraps near the bottom of your compost bin will have decomposed and will look much like soil. There are two ways of harvesting this finished compost: (1) just scoop a few shovels of compost through the compost bin door, or (2) lift the compost bin up and use as much finished compost as possible.



You may want to use a screen to separate the unfinished material from the finished compost known as a trommel screen.

TIP: You can make your own trommel screen in minutes with 1/4 inch hardware cloth or old wire fencing and a wood frame.



Compost Problems and Solutions

SYMPTOM	PROBLEM	SOLUTION
The compost has bad odor.	Not enough air.	Turn it & add coarser material. Sticks, wood chips, etc.
The center of the pile is dry.	Not enough water.	Moisten material while turning the pile.
The compost is damp & warm in the middle but nowhere else.	Pile too small.	Collect more material & mix old material in with the newer.
The heap is damp and sweet smelling, but still will not heat up.	Lack of nitrogen.	Add fresh grass clippings, fresh manure, vegetable scraps, coffee grounds.