

Managing Your Compost Bin

Backyard composting is simple!

There are a few rules to remember about composting to ensure success. There are three categories to keep in mind: the Greens, the Browns, and the Don'ts.

Compost, once broken down, not only feeds plants, but keeps waste from your yard and kitchen out of landfills.

Adding compost to your garden will vastly improve the health of your soil. It supplies nutrients, helps build up beneficial bacteria and other microorganisms and can improve aeration and moisture retention. Your plants will thank you!



“GREEN” materials are high in nitrogen.

They include:

- Grass clippings
- Fruit and vegetable scraps
- Coffee grounds and tea bags
- Plants and plant cuttings, and green leaves

“BROWN” materials are high in carbon.

They include:

- Dead leaves
- Straw
- Paper and cardboard (shredded)
- Egg shells
- Sawdust or wood chips
- Napkins and paper products
- Dryer lint

“DONT’S”

Here is a list of items you should NOT add to the compost bin:

- Animal waste
- Used cat litter
- Weeds (can spread weed seeds)
- Meat, fish and bones
- Fats and dairy
- Chemically treated or pressure treated saw dust, wood chips or wood ash
- Diseased or infested plant material

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- For the best balance of nutrients in your compost, use one part green material to three parts brown material. Materials within the bin should be moist but not wet. If the pile gets too wet, it will smell and decomposition will slow. Ideal moisture is 40-60%.
- Chopped or shredded material will break down faster.
- Let your pile breathe! The beneficial bacteria and fungi in your compost needs oxygen to live. Without adequate air, the pile will begin to smell and decomposition will slow.
- Decomposition will also slow if the pile gets too dry. Routine wetting of the pile may be necessary.
- Routinely turn the pile to accelerate the decomposition process.
- The warmer the pile, the faster the decomposition process. However, the pile should be kept out of direct sunlight and ideally at an internal temperature between 55 - 160° F. Under 55° F, the decomposition process will slow due to reduced microbial action, however above 160° F, the beneficial bacteria will begin to die and decomposition will slow.

For more information, visit <http://extension.psu.edu/plants/gardening/fact-sheets/general-gardening/home-composting-a-guide-for-home-gardeners>

