

Compost problems?

Most common problems will be solved by adding brown materials, which will balance moisture, eliminate odor and discourage flies.

Symptom	Diagnosis	Treatment
Compost smells	Not enough air, pile is too wet.	Turn the pile and add brown material.
Compost is dry throughout	Not enough water to much woody material.	Turn and moisten material. Add green material.
Compost is damp and cool	Not enough material in the bin.	Add more green material mix completely.
Flies at compost bin.	Food scraps not covered.	Put fruit and veggies scraps in center of bin, add browns.
Pests around bin (dogs, rodents, insects).	Improper food scraps added, not enough browns.	No meats, bones, fatty materials or pet wastes.

How to use your Compost?

- **Feed your Lawn:**
Rake a layer of compost on to your lawn, about 1/4" thick.
- **Use it in your garden:**
Spread it around the base of shrubs, trees and perennials.
- **Make potting soil:**
1/3 sifted compost
1/3 soil
1/3 vermiculite
- **Have a small garden?**
Share it with your neighbors or common areas in your subdivision.



Compost Bins

You can make your own compost bin from wood pallets, a garbage can or wire mesh.

Wood Pallet Bin

Materials: 4 to 6 pallets heavy duty plastic ties.



Use 4 pallets to form the sides of the bin and fasten the pallets together with ties. You can also use one pallet for a cover and one for the base.

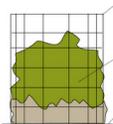
Garbage Can Bin

Materials: garbage can with cover, drill.



Drill holes all over the sides and bottom of the can. Cover the can to keep animals out it.

Wire Mesh Bin



Materials: heavy duty fence wire, plastic ties.

Form a circle with the mesh and fasten with the ties.

Several types of compost bins can be purchase ready to use. Check your local hardware store, the internet, or call this office for information.

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This Brochure has been distributed to you by the City of Charleston, West Virginia in an effort to increase your knowledge of our stormwater management program and educational efforts.

Backyard Composting

An Introduction to Home Composting



A simple, inexpensive way to reduce your garbage and make soil for your garden.



The City of Charleston
STORMWATER DEPARTMENT

What is Compost?

Compost is a dark, crumbly and earthy smelling material made up of decomposed organic matter such as food scraps, leaves, grass clippings and wood chips. Compost contains living organisms that require food, oxygen and water to survive.

Composting is our way of speeding up Mother Nature's decomposition process.

Passive vs. Active Composting

Passive composting is virtually labor-free. It requires a holding bin and takes between 8-12 months to get finished compost.

Active composting requires more frequent turning and will produce compost much quicker than passive composting.

50:50 Brown to Green Ratio

It is important when composting to maintain a balance between carbon based materials (browns) and nitrogen based materials (greens).

Brown materials include: dried grass, autumn dried leaves, saw dust, wood chips (untreated wood), straw, newspaper, brown paper bags (shredded) and paper towels.



Green material includes: fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, tea bags, eggshells, grass clippings (fresh), large leafy weeds and plant trimmings.

Why Compost?

There are many benefits to composting. It is a simple and inexpensive way to dispose of and recycle food scraps and yard waste that would otherwise enter the water stream. Compost also helps improve the health and quality of the soil that it is added to.

Composting:

- Reduces the volume of garbage
- Saves money on disposal costs
- Enriches and adds nutrients to the soil
- Improves soil structure for better root growth, increases moisture and nutrient retention
- Balances acid and alkalinity (pH) of the soil
- Suppresses disease and harmful pests
- Reduces the need for chemical fertilizers

DO Compost:

- any vegetable or fruit scraps
- egg shells
- coffee ground and filters
- tea bags (remove staples)
- newspapers, paper towels
- leaves and grass clippings



DO NOT Compost:

- meat
- fish
- dairy products
- diseased plants
- pet waste
- cat litter
- fat and oils
- wood and charcoal ash
- grass clippings treated with herbicides
- non-organic material like plastic and metal



WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT!

How to Compost

1. **Choose** a flat, partly-sunny area with good drainage and is easily accessible.

2. **Purchase a bin** or build your own rodent-proof compost bin.

tip: The ideal compost bin is on cubic yard in order to retain heat it generates.



3. **Start filling your bin** with a 6" layer of woody brushy material, leaves or straw to promote air circulation.

4. **Alternate layers** of green and brown materials.

tip: Chop up large materials for faster decomposition.

5. **Whenever you add** a food scrap layer, top it off with a layer of brown material (2-3 in). If you only use kitchen scraps your compost will be wet and break down more slowly.

6. **Mix bin contents** every week or two. This aerates the materials and gets the bin heating up again, allowing them to decompose faster.

7. **Moisture content** of the bin should be like a wrung-out sponge. Add water as needed.

tip: To maintain proper moisture content, balance the amount of green and brown materials.

8. **Harvest the compost** when it looks dark and crumbly and the starting ingredients are no longer visible.

