

## EASY GRASS AND LEAF BACKYARD COMPOSTING

### What is compost?

Compost is a dark, crumbly, earthy smelling mixture that consists mostly of decayed organic matter. It is a simple, natural process - nature's way of recycling nutrients and returning them to the soil.

### What can I compost?

Yard wastes, such as fallen leaves, grass clippings, weeds and the remains of garden plants.



### How do I make a compost pile?

It's easy! To build a simple compost bin, do any of the following:

- Use 10 feet of small-mesh wire fencing or snow fencing shaped into a square, circle or a rectangle.
- Buy a bin at a local hardware or garden center.
- Don't use a bin at all, but have a sheltered, free-standing pile.

### To start your compost pile:

Compost piles work best if they have the right balance of materials. Ingredients should be:



**Browns** (carbon source) - Leaves, straw, wood chips, sawdust.

**Greens** (nitrogen source) - Fruit and vegetable wastes, coffee grounds, grass clippings and/or manure. Kitchen scraps should be added to the center of the waste layers where heat will be the greatest.

**That's all there is to it!** Just remember:

- **Turn the pile** - The more you turn it the faster it works.
- **Water the pile** - A compost pile should be kept damp - but not soggy - especially during dry spells.
- **Be patient!** It will take six months to a year before the compost is ready for use.

### Composting Do's & Don'ts

**DO** add lime, small amounts of wood ashes or crushed eggshells to the compost pile to neutralize acids which may form and cause an odor problem.

**DO** mix grass clippings with other wastes to loosen them up. They have a tendency to compact.

**DO** keep the compost pile damp, especially during dry spells.

**DON'T** use unfinished compost. It will rob your plants of nitrogen instead of acting as a fertilizer.

**DON'T** compost weeds that are heavily laden with seeds. Some seeds will not be killed during the heating process.

**DON'T** add meat, fish, bones or fatty food scraps to the compost mixture. They will attract animals, and do not decompose readily.

**DON'T** add diseased vegetable plants to the pile if the compost will be used on a vegetable garden. The disease organisms may reappear the following year.



### Compost Uses:

- **Soil additive** - improves moisture retention, improves texture. Use around garden beds, trees, shrubs or sprinkle it on your lawn.

- **House plants** - use a half to a third of the container volume of compost along with soil.

### Why should I make compost?

- Composting is easy.
- It is a great way to recycle your organic yard and kitchen waste.
- It saves money on peat moss and fertilizer.
- It improves the soil.
- It is the best alternative; it prevents landfilling or burning the compost ingredients.

Learn more about Trash and Recycling on the [Solid Waste Division Home Page](#).