

Composting 101

What is Compost?

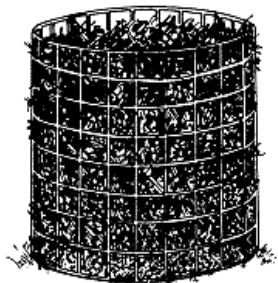
Compost is decaying organic or plant material. A compost pile speeds up this natural process. Applying compost to your garden can improve your soil and provide your plants with valuable nutrients. By composting, you can also reduce your solid waste by as much as thirty percent!

Why Should I Compost?

- * Composting helps reduce waste and returns lost nutrients back to the soil.
- * Humans produce over 1000 pounds of organic waste per person per year! This adds to the volume of garbage in our landfills.
- * Compost holds moisture in the soil like a sponge, which reduces the need for watering.
- * Composting is an inexpensive way to enrich the soil in your garden and lawn.
- * Composting is easy! A compost pile can be any size that you like.

DID YOU KNOW?

Walt Disney World composts about 45 tons of biosolid waste per day and collects 30-35 tons of food waste per day. From January 1999 to September 2003, Disney's Animal Kingdom's animals have contributed over 15 tons of manure for compost.



How do I make a compost pile?

A wire-mesh holding unit makes an inexpensive compost bin. It can be easily built out of galvanized chicken wire or hardware cloth. Non-galvanized chicken wire also can be used, but will not last as long. Posts can be added for additional stability, however, bins made without posts are easier to lift and provides access to the finished compost at the bottom of the pile while the compost at the top of the pile is still decomposing.

Materials:

- 10-foot length of 36-inch-wide 1-inch galvanized chicken wire, or
- 10-foot length of 1/2-inch-wide hardware cloth (note: This will make a bin with a diameter of 3 feet)
- heavy wire for ties
- three or four 4-foot-tall wooden or metal posts (optional for chicken wire bin)

To build a wire-mesh unit with chicken wire:

1. Fold back 3 to 4 inches of wire at each end of the cut piece to provide a strong, clean edge that will not poke or snag and that will be easy to latch.
2. Bend the wire into a circle and set it in place.
3. Cut the heavy wire into lengths for ties. Attach the ends of the chicken wire together with the wire ties, using pliers.
4. If desired, space wood or metal posts around the inside of the chicken wire circle. Holding the posts tightly against the wire, pound them firmly into the ground to provide support.

What type of materials can I compost?

Effective composting requires two types of vegetation. Brown materials provide carbon and are usually dry. Green materials provide nitrogen and are usually moist. For best results, use equal amounts of browns and greens.

GREENS

- green leaves
- coffee grounds
- tea bags
- eggshells (cleaned)

BROWNS

- evergreen needles
- coffee filters
- cotton, wool, linen, & silk scraps
- corn cobs

and crushed)

- spoiled foods
- breads
- green grass clippings
- weeds (before seeding)
- fruit and vegetable scraps
- manure
- bark chips
- dryer/vacuum lint
- dried brown grass clippings
- sawdust
- paper
- pine cones

What type of materials should I avoid composting?

Materials that should be avoided include kitty litter, dairy products, meat, eggs, bones, diseased or poisonous plants, chemically treated yard clippings or other wastes, charcoal or coal ashes. These organic wastes should be avoided because they can cause unwanted odors and can attract flies, maggots, or hungry animals.

Where Can I Learn More about Composting?

Your local county extension office is a great resource or check your local library!