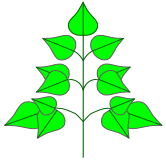


HOME COMPOSTING

What is Composting?



Composting is the controlled decay of organic wastes from your yard, kitchen, and garden into a reusable soil-like product. It is a form of recycling and a natural way of returning valuable nutrients to the soil.

Why Compost?



By composting kitchen and yard waste at home, you create a free source of fertilizer and reduce the amount of garbage you throw away - **Remember:** "the less you throw away, the less you pay!"

How to Compost:



You can compost in your backyard by saving leaves, grass clippings, and pruning, and certain items from your garbage by preparing them properly and placing them in a compost pile. It's easy if you follow these simple guidelines:

Step 1 Choose the right materials

Some things belong in a compost pile and some **do not!** In general, do not compost materials containing animal fats or dairy wastes.

Do Compost:

Fruit & Vegetable Peelings	Coffee Grounds	
Eggshells	Peanut & Nut Shells	
Nail Clippings	Human Hair	Feathers
Horse Manure	Leaves	Bark
Vines, Weeds, Stalks & Stems	Wood Ash	
Fresh Plant Clippings	Sawdust	

Don't Compost:

Vegetable Oils	Salad Dressings	Fish
Meat Scraps	Poultry	Bones
Dairy Products	Fat	
Plastics & Synthetic Fibers		
Diseased or Infected Plants - Temperature does not get hot enough to kill plant diseases.		



Step 2 Select and prepare a site

First, choose a place in your yard that receives equal amounts of sunlight and shade during the day. Next, decide on the type of pile or holding bin to contain your compost. There are many different ways:

- ⇒ Use no enclosure at all. Simply pile the materials up keeping them fairly dense.
- ⇒ Assemble wooden stakes and chicken wire into a simple round enclosure for the pile.
- ⇒ Construct a wooden compost bin (use old lumber, if you have any).
- ⇒ Make holes in the sides and bottom of a garbage can and use it to contain the pile.
- ⇒ Fashion a three-sided enclosure by placing cinder blocks on top of each other. Leave the front open.

Step 3 Prepare the compost materials

Begin by cutting or shredding the materials into small bits and pieces. The smaller the pieces, the faster the pile will decompose. The layer method gives the best results:

- 4 1st LAYER: 3" to 4" of chopped brush or other coarse materials allows for air circulation at the base of the heap.
- 4 2nd LAYER: 6" to 8" of mixed kitchen scraps & yard waste. Materials should be damp.
- 4 3rd LAYER: 1" of soil to firm it up and add microorganisms to help to start the breakdown action.
- 4 4th LAYER: 2" to 3" of manure to provide nitrogen needed or use a high nitrogen garden fertilizer (10-10-10) with NO insect or weed killers in it.

You can also sprinkle lime or wood ash over the heap to produce acidity. Add water if the pile is dry.

Step 4 Maintaining your compost pile

U Provide adequate ventilation. To increase air circulation, turn the compost at least once a week for the quickest results. You can also push rods or poles through the heap and then remove them, leaving channels through which air can pass.

U During rainy weather, cover the pile with a plastic sheet, wood or some other waterproof material to keep it from becoming too wet.

U As the compost materials decompose, they create heat. This is natural, and when the pile is turned, you will be able to feel the heat (140-160 °). If your compost pile is properly prepared, contains no animal fats and is turned regularly, it will not attract pests or create odors.

Step 5 Test whether the compost is ready

Decomposition will occur in about two to three weeks, depending on the materials in the pile, the size of the pile and how often it is turned.



The compost is ready for use when it is dark red, brown or black, and when the materials have broken down into small or fine particles.

Step 6 Use the compost



Sift through the compost and set aside the decomposed materials, returning the rest to the pile. Apply the decomposed mater to your garden in a layer about 1 to 3 inches thick. As you apply the compost, turn and mix it with the soil. It is best to apply no more than one pound of compost per square foot of soil.

Benefits of composting



If you compost on a continual basis, your volume of garbage can be reduced by as much as 25%. What was wasted before now becomes a valuable addition to your garden's soil.



Dodge County Environmental Services
22 6th St E – Dept 391
Mantorville, MN 55955
635-6273

