



Compost is organic material that can be added to soil to help plants grow. Food scraps and yard waste together currently make up more than 28% of what we throw away, and should be composted instead. Making

compost keep these materials out of landfills where they take up space and release methane furthering global warming.

Benefits of Compost:

- Improves soil structure, aeration and water retention
- Adds important micronutrients and increases the bacterial activity in the soil.
- Enriches soil, helping retain moisture and suppress plant diseases and pests.
- Reduces the need for chemical fertilizers.
- Encourages the production of beneficial bacteria and fungi that break down organic matter to create humus, a rich nutrient-filled material.
- Reduces methane emissions from landfills and lowers your carbon footprint.



Choosing a Bin

There are many types of bins that can be used for home composting. Old water drums can do, you may drill 1.5cm aeration holes in rows at roughly 15cm intervals around. Some compost bins are enclosed on the sides and top, and open on the bottom thus the compost materials are directly in contact with the soil. If using this bin, imbed or burry about six to eight inches of the bin into the ground.

Select a Location

Choose a site that is level, well drained and accessible. If possible, place the bin over bare soil to ensure worms and other beneficial organisms can make their way into the pile.

Add Good Composting Materials

Composting ingredients can be leaves, hay, straw sawdust, grass clippings, manure, vegetable trimmings and most green plant cuttings.

Carbon

- Carbon-rich matter (like branches, stems, dried leaves, peelings, sawdust, shredded brown paper bags, corn stalks, coffee filters, coffee grounds, egg shells, straw, peat moss, wood ash) gives compost its light, fluffy appearance.
- "Brown" materials are those that adds carbon to the pile. These include dried plant materials, fallen leaves, shredded tree branches, cardboard or newspaper, hay or straw, and wood shavings.
- The bulkiness of the brown materials allows oxygen to penetrate and nourish the organisms that reside in the pile. Too much nitrogen makes for a dense, smelly and slowly decomposing anaerobic mass.

Nitrogen

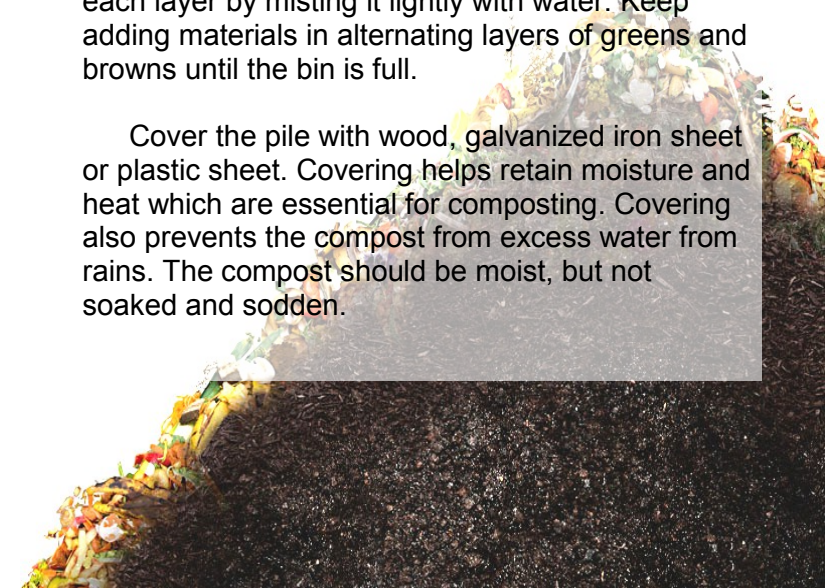
- Nitrogen or protein-rich matter (manures, food scraps, kitchen waste, and green leaves) provide raw materials for making enzymes.
- A healthy compost pile should have much more carbon than nitrogen. A simple rule of thumb is to use one-third green and two-thirds brown materials. If the carbon-to-nitrogen ratio is too high (excess carbon), decomposition slows down. If the carbon-to-nitrogen ratio is too low (excess nitrogen), you'll end up with a smelly pile.
- "Green" materials are those that adds nitrogen to the pile. These include kitchen scraps and coffee grounds, animal manures, except dogs and cats, and fresh plant and grass trimmings.

Making the Compost

Start with a 4 inches layer of brush, twigs, hay or straw at the bottom of the bin. This aids drainage and helps aerate the pile. Then add a 4-inch layer of brown material, then a thin layer of garden soil.

Then add a 4 inches layer of green material topped with a thin layer of compost or soil. Moisten each layer by misting it lightly with water. Keep adding materials in alternating layers of greens and browns until the bin is full.

Cover the pile with wood, galvanized iron sheet or plastic sheet. Covering helps retain moisture and heat which are essential for composting. Covering also prevents the compost from excess water from rains. The compost should be moist, but not soaked and sodden.



Keep compost moist by watering it occasionally. The pile should be damp enough that when a sample taken from the interior is squeezed by hand, a few drops of moisture will appear.

Turn every few weeks with a pitchfork or shovel, this helps aerate the pile. Oxygen is required for the process to work, and turning “adds” oxygen. You can skip this step if you have a ready supply of coarse material like straw. Once you established your compost pile, add new materials by mixing them in, rather than by adding them in layers. Mixing, or turning, the compost pile is key to aerating the composting materials and speeding the decomposition process to completion.

Using of Compost

Generally, compost is ready when it becomes dark and crumbly and most materials are already broken down and with a pleasant, earthy, soil-like smell.



Source:

- Composting. Learn and Easy Guide. Retrieve from <https://learn.eartheasy.com/guides/composting/>

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A Guide to Simple HOME COMPOSTING

