



# Composting

Composting is Mother Nature's recycling method. By composting our food wastes and yard materials we can reduce the amount of trash put into landfills. In return, we create an all natural soil amendment which eliminates the need to use harsh fertilizers on our lawns and gardens.

## What You'll Need:

- Compost bin**, either manufactured or homemade (you can also leave the compost in a "heap," but this may be unsightly in urban areas)
- Lawn and garden clippings, dry leaves**
- Food scraps**, such as fruit rinds, coffee grounds, vegetable scraps, egg shells, etc. (No meat or oily foods)
- Water source**
- Pitch fork for turning**

## Getting Started

Compost "recipes" vary among gardeners, but a good rule of thumb is 50 percent "green" material like grass clippings and food scraps, to 50 percent "brown" material such as dry leaves, and wood shavings. The "green" is rich in nitrogen and will keep the pile hot. The "brown" material adds carbon to the mix and will keep the pile

cool. Both work in concert to create the right blend for maximum compost creation.

Place your compost near a water source for easy watering in case your pile needs moisture. Your compost pile should feel like a wrung-out sponge and smell earthy. If odor issues exist, you should turn the pile with a pitchfork to add oxygen and consider adding some "brown" material as well.

Depending on how carefully you manage your pile, composting can take from 1 month to 2 years. Most piles that are turned weekly and kept at the right moisture level can produce completed compost in about 6 to 8 weeks. Once your pile is a rich, dark color and you can hardly identify the materials you've added, you will have a finished product.

## Problem Solving for Odor or Pests:

- Odors:** These are usually caused by too many "greens" or the "greens" were not adequately stirred into the mixture. Try mixing in more "browns."
- Rodents or animals:** Rodents are usually attracted to fatty foods or meats, which should not be added to the compost.
- Moisture:** Too much or too little can cause problems. Cover your compost during rainy weather to avoid over-wetting and rotting. Sprinkle a little water on the pile only in periods of drought. The moisture consistency should remain that of a wrung-out sponge.