



## Composting Tips

*Home composting of yard waste is the most economical, practical and sustainable ways of dealing with the vegetative debris produced in your yard and gardens. Using compost is an excellent way to enrich your lawn, garden beds, trees, shrubs and even your container plants. The effort that goes into making your own compost will pay off with an organic fertilizer of the highest quality, teeming with micro-organisms that feed the soil in a self-sustaining process. As it slowly continues to decompose over time, compost improves plant growth and helps improve the texture of both heavy clay or light, sandy soils.*

- The best compost piles are made by combining two parts “brown” items for every one part “green” items.
- Browns are: autumn leaves; finely shredded twigs, cornstalks, and other dry stems; coarse wood shavings; shredded paper; cardboard or tissue-type papers; discarded potting soil. Wood-ash, straw and sawdust may be added sparingly.
- Greens are: fresh grass clippings (in thin layers); fresh garden trimmings; garden vegetable leaves and green stems; kitchen vegetable and fruit peels, scrapings and discards; fallen or old fruit; coffee grounds; and healthy plant debris.
- Remember, the smaller the pieces that go into your pile, the faster they will decompose and turn into usable compost.
- Layer these brown and green items together in a 2 : 1 ratio in a convenient spot in your yard or garden. Keep your pile within 3’-5’ in both height and diameter. This size range will lead to faster finished compost – within 2 to 3 months.
- The size of the compost pile does not matter if you are willing to wait 12 to 18 months.
- Compost piles contain microorganisms that will break down the plant matter into dark, rich compost. These organisms need water and air. Keep your compost about as damp as a wrung-out sponge. Poking air holes into your pile with a rod or sturdy stick is helpful to carry air into the compost pile. Turning it regularly is important as well.
- The heat generated by your compost pile is a result of the process of decomposition. Unless it is situated in the shade, in the hot summer months your pile may need to be turned more often to protect the health of the active microbes.
- Never compost pet wastes, evergreen leaves, sawdust or shavings from treated or painted wood, or coated paper.
- NO weeds with seed heads, diseased or pesticide treated plants, non-vegetable food wastes, road-kill, or dead birds.
- If you don’t have a chipper/shredder, twigs and branches less than a ¼” in diameter should be cut into 2” pieces and added a few at a time. They break down slowly, but they’ll help provide the air spaces necessary for decomposition.
- Large quantities of woody debris may be shredded and used as mulch where slow decomposition is an asset.
- Sometimes a traditional compost pile is not the solution for a specific situation. For instance, in the fall when leaves are in abundant supply, they may overwhelm your pile and throw off your mix. A better plan is to chop them with your lawnmower and then use them for winter mulch to protect your vegetable or flower beds.

Remember: Compost improves soil health

which creates healthier plants which in turn

help clean our air and water and conserve our soils.

**“A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself.” – Franklin D. Roosevelt**