

Resources

These resources will provide more detailed information on home composting.

Internet resources

Search the internet for “home composting” to find more resources. Some good examples are:

www.composting101.com
www.epa.gov/compost
www.compostinfo.com

Books

- **“Complete Book of Composting”** J. I. Rodale. Includes thorough descriptions of different structures.
- **“Worms Eat My Garbage”** Mary Appelhof. How to set up and maintain a worm composting system.
- **“Let It Rot! The Gardener’s Guide to Composting.”** Stu Campbell. A great book for beginners.
- **“The Soul of Soil: A Guide to Ecological Soil Management”** Gershuny & Smillie. Wonderful information about more than just compost.

Videos

Complete Home Composting Guide with Ecological Horticulturalist Howard Stenn
30 minutes

Home Composting: Turning Spoils to Soil
17 minutes

Recycle Life: Compost! 60 minutes

This is only a partial listing and by providing it to you, Benton SWCD is not recommending these resources over any others.

Compost Bins

You can make your own compost bin from wood pallets, a garbage can or hardware cloth.

Here’s how:

Wood Pallet Bin



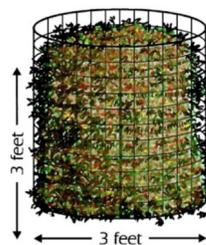
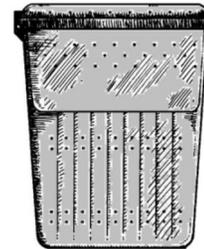
Materials: 4-6 pallets, heavy-duty plastic ties.

Use 4 pallets to form the sides of the bin and fasten the pallets together with ties. You can also use another pallet for a cover and one more for a base.

Garbage Can Bin

Materials: garbage can with cover, drill.

Drill holes all over the sides and bottom of the can. Cover the can to keep animals out of it.



Hardware Cloth Bin

Materials: ½” mesh hardware cloth (3’ tall x 12’-15’ long), heavy duty plastic ties.

Form a circle with the mesh and fasten with the ties.

You can also purchase a bin from home improvement & garden centers, hardware stores or the internet (www.composters.com or www.gardeners.com).



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Benton Soil & Water Conservation District

Composting Has A-PEEL

An Introduction to Home Composting



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Modified from a CT Dept of Environmental Protection brochure (www.ct.gov/dep) on 8/13/08

What is Compost?

Compost is a dark, crumbly and earthy-smelling material made up of decomposed organic matter such as food scraps, leaves, grass clippings and wood chips. Compost contains living organisms that require food, oxygen and water to survive.

Composting is our way of speeding up Mother Nature's decomposition process.

Passive vs. Active Composting

Passive composting is virtually labor-free. It requires a holding bin and takes between 8-12 months to get finished compost.

Active composting requires more frequent turning and will produce compost much more quickly than passive composting.

1/3 Green to 2/3 Brown

It is important when composting to maintain the optimum ratio between low nitrogen materials (browns) and high nitrogen materials (greens).

Brown materials include:

dried grass, autumn dried leaves, saw dust, wood chips (untreated wood), straw. **Woody materials**, such as sawdust and wood chips, break down very slowly. Use these materials on paths and to mulch woody plants.

Green materials include:

fruit & vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, tea bags, egg shells & fresh grass.



Why Compost?

There are many benefits to composting. It is a simple and inexpensive way to dispose of and recycle food scraps and yard waste that would otherwise enter the waste stream. Compost also helps improve the health and quality of the soil to which it is added.

Composting organic wastes:

- Reduces the flow of landfill-destined garbage
- Saves money on disposal costs

Using Compost:

- Enriches and adds nutrients to the soil
- Improves soil for better root growth, increased moisture holding and greater nutrient retention
- Balances acidity and alkalinity (pH) of the soil
- Suppresses disease and harmful pests
- Reduces the need for chemical fertilizers

DO Compost:

- Any vegetable or fruit scraps
- Egg shells
- Coffee grounds & filters
- Tea bags (remove staples)
- Newspaper, paper towels
- Leaves & grass clippings
- Livestock manure
- Flowers

DO NOT Compost:

- Meat
- Fish
- Dairy products
- Diseased plants
- Pet waste
- Cat litter
- Fats and oils
- Wood & charcoal ash
- Grass clippings treated with herbicides
- Non-organic material like plastic & metal



WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT!

How to Compost

1. Choose an area about 4x4x4 feet that is within reach of a watering hose. It should be an easily accessible spot on grass or soil. Place the compost pile away from buildings and surface water.
2. Start with a 6" layer of the coarsest, driest materials at the bottom of the pile.
3. Alternate 6" layers of brown material and 2" layers of green material.
4. Add water!!! The pile should be 50% solids & 50% water. The pile should be as wet as a wrung sponge.
5. Turn or stir the pile after a week to aerate.
6. Continue to add food scraps year round by burying them in the pile and providing more brown material as needed. See trouble shooting chart below.
7. The compost is ready when it looks dark and crumbly, the initial ingredients are no longer visible, or it passes through a 1/2-inch screen.
8. Use the unscreened portion to start a new pile.



Troubleshooting

| Problem | Solution |
|-------------------|---|
| Compost smells | Turn the pile & add browns |
| Too wet | Turn the pile & add dry material |
| Too dry | Turn the pile and add water, then shade |
| Cool to the touch | Add more greens |