

Compost Problems?

Most common problems will be solved by adding brown materials, which will balance moisture, eliminate odour and discourage flies.

Symptom	Cause	Treatment
Bin has a bad odour	Not enough air; pile is too wet	Turn pile. Add coarse, dry materials such as straw or corn stalks
Pile is dry throughout	Not enough water. Too much woody material	Turn and moisten materials. Add fresh waste. Cover pile to reduce evaporation
Compost material is damp and warm only in the middle	Not enough material in the bin	Collect more materials and mix the new ingredients into the old
Material is damp and sweet smelling, but not heating up	Lack of nitrogen (green materials)	Mix in a nitrogen-rich (green) material such as fresh grass clippings, fresh manure or blood meal
Pests around bin (dogs, rodents, insects)	Improper food trimmings added or materials not covered well enough	Do not add meats, fats, bones or animal waste. Use a rodent resistant compost bin
Flies at compost bin	Food scraps not covered. Not enough brown material	Put fruit and vegetable scraps in centre of bin; cover with soil or brown material
Fruit flies in kitchen	Scraps are attracting fruit flies	Keep kitchen scrap collection pail in the refrigerator or freezer

Tips for composting faster

- Place bin in a partly sunny location
- Place bin on exposed soil to make it easier for worms and other insects to access the bin contents
- Chop larger materials into smaller pieces
- Mix bin contents weekly
- Save your fall leaves to use in the summer

Five great reasons to compost:

- 1. Improves your garden**
Compost is an excellent conditioner for your soil, increasing the amount of air and moisture reaching the roots for larger, healthier, plants.
- 2. Reduces your garbage**
Composting is an easy and effective way to reduce household waste going to the curb by as much as 50%.
- 3. It's easy**
Setting up a composter in your backyard is simple and inexpensive. Everyone in the home can participate and feel good about making a difference.
- 4. Reduces use of chemical fertilizers**
Compost provides valuable nutrients to plants, eliminating the need for chemical fertilizers. Composting returns nutrients to the garden.
- 5. Helps the environment**
Managing your organics in your backyard reduces the need for more trucks on the road and recycles nutrients back into the earth.

Composting is nature's way of breaking down vegetation using worms, good bacteria and other organisms.

A GUIDE TO

Backyard Composting



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Get the best out of your bin!

1. Placing bin

Place bin on a level, well-drained and partly sunny location, where it will be easy to get to in the summer and winter.



2. Create base layer

Add approximately 6-10 cm (3-4 in) of leaves, straw, or twigs to the bottom of the bin. This allows air to circulate and encourages proper drainage.

3. Add materials

Add a mixture of green and brown materials. Greens are quick to rot and provide important nitrogen and moisture. Browns are drier, provide fiber and carbon, and allow important air pocket to form. See **What's In What's Out** for acceptable materials.



4. Mix bin contents and regulate moisture

Mix bin contents every 1-2 weeks. Mixing adds air and distributes moisture and heat which helps speed up composting. Bin contents should be the consistency of a wrung out sponge. Mix the contents to determine the moisture content. If compost is too wet, add more brown materials; if it is too dry, add some green materials.



5. Use compost

The composting process usually takes 3-9 months. Finished compost is a dark brown, almost black soil-like layer found at the bottom and center of the bin. Remove the door lid and use a shovel to remove the compost. Spread the finished compost onto your garden beds to retain moisture, add nutrients and suppress weeds.



What's In:

Green Materials

- ✓ raw fruit and vegetable peelings or leftovers
- ✓ coffee grounds
- ✓ tea leaves, tea bags
- ✓ eggshells
- ✓ grass clippings
- ✓ fresh/green garden waste

Brown Materials

- ✓ twigs and small brush
- ✓ cardboard egg cartons
- ✓ coffee filters
- ✓ paper towels, napkins
- ✓ shredded paper
- ✓ wood chips and shavings



What's Out:

- ✗ cheese
- ✗ fats and oils
- ✗ meat, poultry, fish, bones
- ✗ dairy
- ✗ grains, pasta, breads
- ✗ cooked food
- ✗ diseased plants
- ✗ pesticide-treated grass
- ✗ pet waste