

## Let Nature Work For You!

Composting is a natural process that has occurred for millions of years on the forest floor. As leaves fall and are covered by other leaves and organic material, earthworms, microorganisms, and insects transform the organic matter into nutrient rich soils. This is accomplished with the help of the sun's rays, water and oxygen.

You too can complete this transformation of organic waste into healthy soils for plant growth by composting.



## More Information

### Websites

[www.cityfarmer.org/wormcomp61.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/wormcomp61.html)

[www.jeonet.com/city/compost.htm](http://www.jeonet.com/city/compost.htm)

[www.oldgrowth.org/compost](http://www.oldgrowth.org/compost)

Resources available  
through our Department

**Home Composting Made Easy** booklet

A guide to getting the most out of the Earth Machine.

**Do the ROT Thing** video

Alameda County residents show how they use compost.

**Gardening Nature's Way: Composting for the 90's** video

An Earth to Earth Production on a variety of composting methods that suits your lifestyle.

## Trouble Shooting

Problem	Solution
Center of pile is dry or white- mold appears	Moisten and turn
Heap smells sweet but will not heat up	Add nitrogen source- greens
Heap is damp in middle but dry all around	Pile is too small ;add material to pile and moisten
Bad odor	Aerate by turning



**Send Your Leaves  
to a Mulch Better Place.**

RECYCLE.

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# Backyard Composting



**Compost** is a naturally recycled material. Nature uses **waste** (grass clippings, paper, wood scraps, fruits and vegetables) soil **critters** (earthworms, bacteria and other organisms), **water**, and **air** to create nutrient rich soils.

## Why Compost ?

- Compost can save you money and resources. Since yard waste has been banned from Illinois landfills, save money by composting instead of paying for yard waste curbside program. 
- Composting replaces essential organic material that would otherwise be lost from the soil. Compost improves soil aeration and drainage.
- Makes you feel green by doing your part to conserve earth's resources.
- Promotes weed and erosion control
- Conserves water
- Creating compost takes as little as five minutes per 

## Materials



- Browns** are dry materials such as wood chips, sawdust, dried leaves, plants and straw. This is the carbon rich component. Addition of brown materials reduces unpleasant odors.



- Greens** are the wet materials such as fresh grass clippings, fruit and vegetable remains. These materials supply the compost with nitrogen.



- Heat** helps the microorganisms as well as the chemical reactions that transform your waste. In cold temperatures, large piles will retain necessary heat.

- Oxygen** is essential for the survival of aerobic organisms.

- Water** keeps the organisms alive and dissolves the materials.



Do Compost	Don't Compost
Grass clippings Leaves Dead plants Fruit wastes Coffee grounds Straw/hay Vegetable scraps Fruit scraps Hair/lint	Meat Fish, poultry Dairy products Grease Bones Treated wood Branches Plastic/glass/metal Cat or dog waste

## Recipe



Although compost bins are available, they can easily be made. Drill 1/2" holes every 6 inches around an old garbage can to create a barrel bin. Cement blocks, bricks or rocks can be used to create block bins. Simple compost containers can also be constructed of galvanized wire, fencing, boards and pallets.

Layer materials about 3-6" in depth. Alternate wet (green) and dry (brown) materials beginning with dry.

Two parts green to one part brown, is the best balance in your pile.

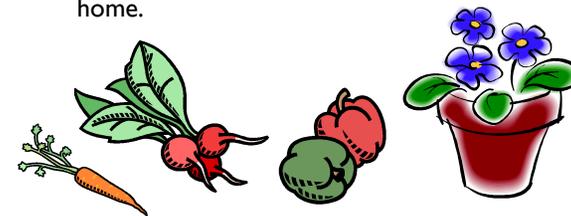
Do not pack the material into the bin /pile keep it fluffed for airflow.

Add water with each layer until the pile is 3' tall (4-6' is preferred). The pile should be kept damp but too much water will cool the compost to unsuitable levels.

Turning the material is not necessary but will speed up the process. Your compost will be ready in a matter of weeks.

Ready to use compost is dark brown or black, crumbly and has the sweet smell of Earth.

The nutrient-rich compost produced can maintain a healthy environment for both outside gardens and plants with in your home.



### Plan carefully....

- ✓ Away from large trees and wooden structures
- ✓ Adequate air circulation around bin
- ✓ Out of full sun
- ✓ Placement on bare ground