

How to Compost at Home

There are many different ways to make a compost pile; we have provided the following for general reference. Helpful tools include pitchforks, square-point shovels or machetes, and water hoses with a spray head. Regular mixing or turning of the compost and some water will help maintain the compost.

Backyard Composting

- Select a dry, shady spot near a water source for your compost pile or bin.
- Add brown and green materials as they are collected, making sure larger pieces are chopped or shredded.
- Moisten dry materials as they are added.
- Once your compost pile is established, mix grass clippings and green waste into the pile and bury fruit and vegetable waste under 10 inches of compost material.
- Optional: Cover top of compost with a tarp to keep it moist. When the material at the bottom is dark and rich in color, your compost is ready to use. This usually takes anywhere between two months to two years.

Benefits of Composting

- Enriches soil, helping retain moisture and suppress plant diseases and pests.
- Reduces the need for chemical fertilizers.
- Encourages the production of beneficial bacteria and fungi that break down organic matter to create humus, a rich nutrient-filled material.
- Reduces methane emissions from landfills and lowers your carbon footprint.

[Composting Quick Reference](#)

Composting Quick Reference

| What to Compost | What Not to Compost and Why |
|---|---|
| Fruits and Vegetables Eggshells Coffee grounds and Filters Tea Bags Nut Shells Shredded Newspaper Cardboard Paper Yard Trimmings Grass Clippings Houseplants Hay and Straw Leaves Sawdust Wood Chips Cotton and Wool Rags Dryer and Vacuum Cleaner lint Hair and Fur Fireplace Ashes | Black Walnut Tree Leaves or Twigs - Releases substances that might be harmful to plants Coal or Charcoal Ash - Might contain substances harmful to plants Dairy Products (e.g., butter, milk, sour cream, yogurt) and eggs* - Create odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies Diseased or insect-ridden plants - Diseases or insects might survive and be transferred back to other plants Fats, Grease, Lard, or Oils* - Create odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies Meat or Fish Bones and Scraps* - Create odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies Pet Wastes (e.g., dog or cat feces, soiled cat litter)* - Might contain parasites, bacteria, germs, pathogens, and viruses harmful to humans Chemically Treated Yard Trimmings - Might kill beneficial composting organisms *Check with your local composting or recycling coordinator to see if these organics are accepted by your community curbside or drop-off composting program. |

All composting requires three basic ingredients:

- Browns - This includes materials such as dead leaves, branches, and twigs.
- Greens - This includes materials such as grass clippings, vegetable waste, fruit scraps, and coffee grounds.
- Water - Having the right amount of water, greens, and browns is important for compost development.

Your compost pile should have an equal amount of browns to greens. You should also alternate layers of organic materials of different-sized particles. The brown materials provide carbon for your compost, the green materials provide nitrogen, and the water provides moisture to help break down the organic matter.