

## Why Compost?

- Saves water by helping the soil hold moisture.
- Reduces landfill waste.
- Reduces the need for fertilizers and nutrients to the soil.
- Encourages healthy root structure, lightens clay soils and helps sandy soils hold water.
- Attracts and feeds earthworms.
- Helps protect plants from drought and frost.
- Reduces weeds when used as mulch.

## What to Compost

### BROWNS

Egg shells

Woody trimmings

Pine needles

Dried leaves

Straw

Shredded paper

Vegetable waste

### GREENS

Tea bags

Coffee grounds

Coffee filters

Grass clippings

Shrub clippings

Fruit waste

Weeds w/o seeds

## What not to Compost

Animal products (meat, bones, fish, grease)

Dairy products

Manure

Weeds with seeds

Diseased plants

## SLOW METHOD

Composting is a natural process, it will occur, in time, with little or no attention.

1. Build a pile with green and brown materials as they become available.
2. If kitchen waste is added, it must be buried in the pile.
3. After 6 months or more, finished compost may be found at the bottom or oldest sections of the pile.

## STANDARD METHOD

1. Gather enough green and brown material to construct a pile that will be at least 3x3x3. Larger materials need to be shredded into smaller pieces.
2. Start the pile on the ground with a 4 to 6 inch layer of brown material.
3. Add a 4 to 6 inch layer of green materials on top of the brown layer.
4. Mix the two layers together.
5. Check the mix for moisture. If dry add water. The mix should be just wet enough that when squeezed, only a few drops of water appear.
6. Continue adding brown and green layers and mixing until the pile has reached 3 feet or the bin is full. Once the pile is built, do not add new materials.
7. Every week the pile should be mixed and turned.

8. After four to six weeks, the pile will have a dark and crumbly texture and a pleasant odor. The compost is now ready to use.

## FAST METHOD

1. Follow steps 1 through 6 for the standard method.
2. After 3 days turn and mix the pile. Check moisture and adjust.
3. Turn and mix every 3 days. Check moisture and adjust. Temperatures of 130° to 160° may be observed.
4. After 2 weeks, the compost will be dark brown and crumbly with an earthy smell. Allow finished compost to age for two weeks before using around plants.

## Ways to use Compost

- Mix it into flower and vegetable beds.
- Top-dress your lawn with it.
- Use compost in potting mixes.
- Give it to a friend.



Plans for a 3x3x3 bin and other composting information can be found at:

[cecolusa.ucdavis.edu](http://cecolusa.ucdavis.edu)

## Troubleshooting Guidelines

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Cause</u>	<u>Solution</u>
Bad odor (rotten smell)	Excess Moisture	Turn pile add dry material
Bad odor (ammonia smell)	Excess green material	Add brown material
	Compacted leaves	Turn pile
	Inadequate air	Turn pile
Pile is dry	Inadequate water	Add water
Low compost	Pile too small	Add size
	Too dry	Add water
	Too wet	Add brown material
	Too little air	Turn pile
	Lack of Nitrogen	Add grass
	Cold weather	Add size or insulate
	Particle size large	Chip or grind material
Pest infestation	Improper food scraps	No meats
	Food scraps not covered	Cover food scraps in center of pile



For answers to gardening questions contact the Colusa County Master Gardener Hot -Line: 530-458-0570 or

mgcolusa@ucdavis.edu

## Q & A

- What is composting?**  
 Composting is a natural process by which organic materials decompose.
- What is compost?**  
 Compost is the soil amendment product that results from proper composting.
- Is composting recycling?**  
 Yes, just like plastic beverage containers yard clippings and kitchen scraps are a valuable resource that can be recycled.
- How long does it take to produce compost?**  
 Composting happens, but the time varies with your level of labor.
- Why should I compost?**  
 Backyard composting allows you to recycle your yard clippings and kitchen scraps into a valuable soil amendment.

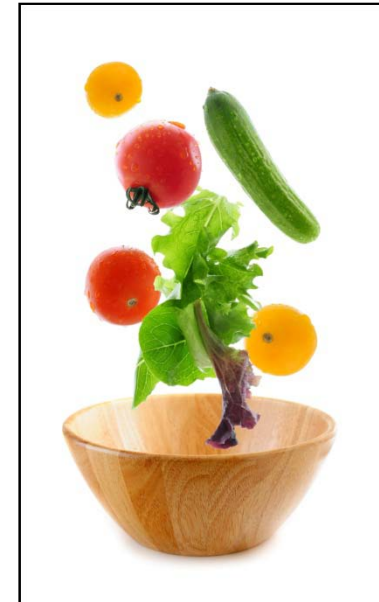
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## COMPOSTING 101



## JUST ADD WATER AND STIR

Colusa County Master Gardeners

