Speeding Up The Process

Additional ingredients, if added, help speed the composting process:

- ✓ **LIME** keeps a pile from getting too acidic or sour
- ✓**MANURE** adds nitrogen and microbes, which helps heat and speed up the process
- ✓**SOIL** provides microbes, which help start the composting
- ✓**BLOOD MEAL** adds nitrogen, which also helps heat and speed up the process .

Troubleshooting

PILE IS NOT COMPOSTING – it may be too dry or there may be too much brown material.

- ✓ Water and turn in more green material. Remember, yard and food waste will compost more quickly if reduced to smaller sized particles.

PILE HAS A ROTTEN OR AMMONIA-LIKE SMELL – it may be too wet to compost or have too much nitrogen (greens).

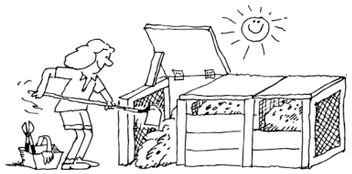
✓Add carbon (brown) material and turn

FLIES OR OTHER PESTS – it may have too much green material on top.

✓Turn the green material into the pile more frequently and add brown material.

Harvesting Your Compost

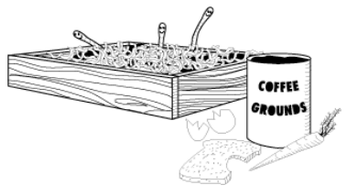
Finished compost improves soil in many ways. Compost acts like a sponge. It holds water in the soil, holds the soil together and keeps it from washing away. Finished compost is also rich in nutrients and healthy soil bacteria, which feed and protect your



garden plants naturally. If you have no use for it, a bag of compost makes a wonderful gift to a neighbor or friend who gardens.

Vermiculture

Vermicomposting is the art of using red worms to compost all of your household food scraps in a simple container. The added benefit is a regular supply of top quality mulch for the garden. If you live in an apartment or an area without enough yard space, then give vermicomposting a try. It can be done in a smaller area with minimal effort and still reduces the amount of food waste being sent to the landfill. The worms are always a hit with the younger crowd as well.



Additional Resources

Books

Backyard Composting, Harmonious Press

Worms Eat My Garbage
Mary Appelhop, Howard Press

Let It Rot, Stu Campbell, Storey Pub.

The Complete Book of Composting
Joe Rodale & Staff, Rodale Press

The Mulch Book , Stu Campbell, Storey Pub**.**

On the Internet

Compost Troubleshooting Guide
https://extension.arizona.edu/backyard-composting

Grasscycling
https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/grasscycling

Compost in a Hurry
https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8037.pdf

Composting is Good for your Garden and the Environment
https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8367.pdf

Eventually …
COMPOST HAPPENS!

BACKYARD COMPOSTING MADE EASY

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Arcata, CA 95521
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Revised November 2020

Californians have a long-standing commitment to reduce solid waste through reduction and recycling. Backyard composting is one of the best ways each of us can turn

Why Compost?

Many people are composting their yard and food waste because it provides benefits at home and for the community.

Thirty percent of all household garbage is compostable, including food and yard scraps. When you compost, you eliminate "trash" and reduce your garbage bill. Additionally, compost returns nutrients to the soil and improves soil fertility, aeration and moisture retention.

What Is Composting?

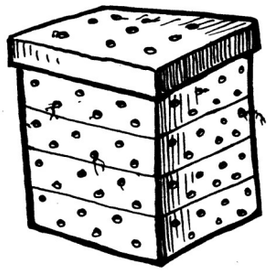
Composting is nature's way of recycling. When plants die, they naturally decompose and add nutrients to the soil. In backyard composting we speed up the process by using yard and kitchen waste to build a compost pile.

Compost Structures

Some composters just heap their compostable materials into a pile in their garden. Others use a structure. These structures can be built at home, or purchased at a garden shop. Some common structures are pictured below. (Heaps, hoops and bins can be either covered or uncovered.)

Heap

Hoop



Covered Bin

A Balanced Compost Pile

A healthy compost pile includes "green" and "brown" plant materials, air and water.

GREEN MATERIALS include fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, tea bags, grass clippings and manures. These tend to be moist. Greens provide *nitrogen*, which heat and feed the pile.

BROWN MATERIALS include small branches, leaves, saw dust, straw and dried grass. These tend to be dry and dull colored. Browns provide *carbon*, the other major ingredient needed to feed the pile.

AIR must be balanced with **WATER**. A pile that is either too dry or too wet will not decompose properly. A rule of thumb is to keep the pile as moist as a wrung-out sponge.

DO NOT COMPOST

There are a few organic items that should **not** be composted:

MEAT & BONES due to potential rodent & odor problems

DOG & CAT MANURE due to risk of diseases

YARD WASTE GREATER THAN ¼ INCH IN DIAMETER (the size of a pencil) as it will not break down quickly.

Building A Pile

Different materials and lifestyles make for different composting styles.

A common method for building a pile is layering. Begin by placing a layer of brown material on the bottom to provide adequate drainage and air. Then alternate layers of green and brown materials. Each layer should be four to eight inches deep. A pile will heat up well with this method, especially when mounded to at least three feet high. If the materials are dry, water the pile as you build it.

This style of composting works when you are ready to build a pile all at once. Oftentimes, kitchen and yard waste are not generated all at once. Continuous additions to compost pile are fine, but always spread food out and cover it with dry material, or dig it into the pile. This deters pests and helps the food compost.

Yard trimmings combined with kitchen waste can take about six months to one year to compost if they are not turned. Compost can happen more quickly (two weeks to four months) if it is turned every two weeks.

Kitchen scraps mixed with saw dust in buckets will compost in one to three months if you turn it every two weeks. Experiment with what works best for you, your lifestyle, and your environment.