



## GET STARTED COMPOSTING!

### 2 BASIC WAYS TO COMPOST:

**COLD COMPOSTING** is just collecting compostable materials and corralling them into a pile or open bin. A slower method that yields some finished compost in about a year.

**HOT COMPOSTING** is more labor intensive but yields finished compost in 1-3 months during the growing season. Hot composting may be done in

tumblers or other smaller containers, requires smaller pieces of material, more careful attention to proportions in the pile, and requires frequent stirring (1-3 times per week). The pile should heat up to an internal temperature of 110-160 degrees as it “cooks”, thanks to the bacteria and fungi aiding the decay process.

### COMPOSTING INSTRUCTIONS:

--**Best size** for a compost pile is a cube 3'-5' high, wide, and deep.

--**Be a good neighbor**—keep your compost system tidy, contained, and free from bad odors, especially if it's clearly visible beyond your yard.

--Place your pile or bin in a **shaded, well-drained location near a water source** and close to your garden. Cold compost piles should have direct contact with the soil beneath them, so beneficial organisms needed for the decay process can enter the pile from the soil.

--**Shred or chop it up!** The greater the surface area of the materials in your pile, the faster your compost will decay.

--Build your pile in **layers**, with **2-3 parts brown** materials and **1 part green** materials in each layer. Moisten each layer with your sprayer nozzle as you build the pile, and **keep your pile moistened** like a damp sponge, not soggy or saturated.

--**BROWNS** (carbon rich) materials may include straw, sawdust from untreated wood, small bark chips, chopped dry leaves, pine needles, shredded newspaper or brown paper bags.

--**GREENS** (nitrogen rich) materials may include used coffee grounds, fruit and vegetable scraps, crushed egg shells, grass and seed-free plant clippings, rabbit manure and bedding free of weed seeds.

--**NEVER ADD:** dog, cat, or human waste, any kind of oils, meats or fat, dairy products (smell bad and attract unwanted animals and pests), hay and weeds that have bloomed or gone to seed, plant material treated with systemic pesticides, pressure treated wood scraps, or any part of a Black Walnut tree.

--**Avoid** chunky items like corn cobs, peach or avocado pits, pineapple tops, or pine cones (they take a long time to decay), manure from grazing animals or hay-fed animals (it will be full of weed seeds), and diseased plant material (temps inside the pile may be insufficient to kill all the disease organisms).

--**Finished compost** stops heating up, has a fine, crumbly texture, and the pieces are no longer recognizable.

--**Use finished compost to:** top-dress your lawn in early spring or in fall, feed your vegetable or flower gardens (add to depth of 2-6 inches and work in to the top 4 inches of soil), mix with backfill (no more than half) when planting new trees, shrubs or perennials, enrich the soil in your potted plants (add to potting mix when transplanting or top-dress established plants), etc.

**NOTE: Use finished compost as a supplement, not a substitute for fertilizer.** Finished compost will add organic matter to your soil, improving its structure and enabling it to better retain nutrients, air, and moisture for healthy plants, but by itself, compost releases nutrients too slowly to supply everything needed for good plant growth.

#### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

The Rodale Book of Composting, Newly Revised and Updated: Simple Methods to Improve Your Soil, Recycle Waste, Grow Healthier Plants, and Create an Earth-Friendly Garden (Rodale Classics) Paperback – June 5, 2018. Available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

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[Pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com) and [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) have loads of info on building and using your own composters.