

Summit



Composts

Saving money,
creating rich mulch,
and
reducing waste

Online Resources
for composting:

Rutgers Cooperative
Extension Fact Sheet

<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=FS811>

National Geographic
"how-to" video

<http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/green-guide-howdini/compost-gg>

Beginner's Guide to
Composting

http://www.compost-info-guide.com/beginner_guide.htm



Prepared by the Summit
Environmental Commission

Composting: Making "Gardener's Gold"

Composting is an easy, environmentally-friendly way to turn your fruit and vegetable peelings, old leaves, coffee grounds, and other bits and scraps into "gardener's gold"-- rich, organic matter that boosts soil's fertility, moisture control, and structure.

Step One: Choose or make a compost bin and select a location in your yard

- Build or buy a compost bin--Check your local hardware store or garden shop, or just use chicken wire or wooden pallets (available at the Transfer Station) to create a bin. Compost "tumblers" alleviate the need for layering or turning and speed up the process.
- Choose a site that has good drainage, and place your compost bin over bare soil.

Step Two: Gather compost materials

DO choose "Greens":

- vegetable & fruit scraps
- grass clippings
- flowers & plants
- weeds
- coffee grounds & filters
- young hedge trimmings

DO choose "Browns":

- leaves & twigs
- hay & straw
- tea bags
- shredded paper
- shredded cardboard
- sawdust

DO NOT choose:

- meat & bones
- poultry & fish
- eggs & dairy items
- diseased plants
- animal feces
- treated wood

Step Three: Layer compost materials into the bin

- Bottom layer should include brush, twigs, hay or straw to maintain aeration.
- Next layer should be a thick layer of the "brown" material.
- Next layer should be several inches of the "green" material.
- Continue layering brown, then green, until the bin is full.
- Optimum bin or pile size is at least 3 feet x 3 feet (to hold the heat of microbial activity) but not larger than 5 feet x 5 feet (so that air can reach the microbes in the center).
- Too much work? Just toss it all in and turn it every once in a while, or use compost tumblers.

Step Four: Maintain your compost bin

- If your goal is to make compost quickly, turn your compost with a pitchfork every 2 weeks or so to supply the microorganisms with enough oxygen to do their work.
- If you are less concerned with speed, all that's really necessary is to be careful not to overdo the greens (gets smelly) and nature will take care of the pile in her own time. Adding leaves or twigs along with greens also helps with aeration.
- If your bin smells, or if it the material doesn't seem to be decaying, consult the handy composting troubleshooting guide located here: <http://compostguide.com/troubleshooting-composting-problems/>

Step Five: Reap the benefits!

Depending on how you layer and turn your compost, you should have rich mulch within 4 months to a year. Use your nutrient-rich compost to:

- Mulch areas around your flowers, vegetables, shrubs and trees
- Condition your soil by mixing compost into it
- Make your own potting mix by combining equal parts of compost, sand and soil
- Top dress your lawn