

## Where can I get a composter?

Composters are readily available at most garden shops, hardware stores and building supply stores.

As with anything prices vary according to the product features, size and quality. Be sure to shop and compare. Not all composters are created equal. Determine your needs and expectations and then find a composter which will meet them. With a few materials and a little effort, you can even build one yourself.

## Using Compost

\*finished compost can be dug directly into the garden where flowers or vegetables are to grow.

\*when screened it can be used as a mulch or a top dressing for a lawn. Aerate the lawn first.

\*equal amounts of screened compost, soil and vermiculite or perlite make a good planter mix.

\*water your plants with compost tea made from a bag of compost in a bucket of water.

## Composting Alternatives

Mulching—Yard waste such as lawn clippings can be used as mulch around plants, increasing moisture, preventing weed growth and preventing soil compaction.

Trenching—Kitchen waste can be composted in a trench. With a trench 45 cm deep a layer of 15 cm of kitchen waste can be placed in the bottom and covered with soil.

## NORTHERN CONCERNS

### Bears!

If you do not follow the rules of good composting then your compost may attract bears.

In the spring bears are attracted to the smell of rotting kitchen waste as residents start their composters working. In the fall it is the smell of rotting fruit that brings them.

To keep the bears away:

- Cover the kitchen waste each time you add it. A little lime helps to control the smell, but don't add too much.
- Do not add large amounts of fruit waste in the fall unless it is mixed with other compostables and well covered.
- Keep your compost pile well aerated so that it does not smell

### Composting in Winter

The composting process may stop in the depths of winter when the pile is frozen, but those kitchen scraps can still be added. Just keep them covered and the freezing and thawing will prepare them for fast decomposition in the spring.

### REAPS COMPOST DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

Located in Fort George Park (1950 Gorse Street). The garden provides an opportunity to view a variety of composters at work, ask questions, locate resource materials or attend composting and vermicomposting classes.

For hours of operation and more information call 250-561-7327.

Website: [www.reaps.org](http://www.reaps.org)  
email: [garden@reaps.org](mailto:garden@reaps.org)



Presents:

**Compost Works!**

## What is Composting?

Composting is a natural process that occurs when plant material dies. Bacteria, fungi, worms and other organisms living in the soil and air transform dead plants, leaves, etc into rich, dark material called humus or compost.

## Why Compost?

Compostable materials, such as yard and kitchen wastes make up more than 30% of household wastes. Composting these materials goes a long way toward reaching the Fraser-Fort George Regional District's goal of diverting waste from the PG landfill by 50%.

Goals aside; why send to the dump material that can enrich the soil and save you \$\$? Finished compost can replace expensive chemical fertilizers and give you healthier shrubs, vegetables, flowers and grass.

## HOW TO COMPOST

Four essential ingredients for good composting:  
**NITROGEN \* CARBON \* WATER \* OXYGEN**

Anything that was once a living plant can be composted, but to make your compost work well you need a balance of nitrogen and carbon rich materials. All plants contain varying ratios of nitrogen and carbon. Green materials such as grass clippings are high in nitrogen, whereas brown materials such as leaves are high in carbon. If you use equal amounts of green and brown materials, i.e. one bucket of grass clippings and one bucket of leaves, you should obtain a good balance. The materials can be layered or mixed together. Mixing will start the compost working more quickly.

### Nitrogen-rich materials

Fresh grass clippings  
 Manure

Kitchen scraps  
 Plant trimmings

Balancing the supply of water and oxygen is essential for good composting. The decomposers need moisture to do their work. If the pile is too dry nothing will happen, and if the pile is too wet it will smell. The pile should be as moist as a wrung out sponge. Too wet a pile eliminates the essential oxygen that decomposers need. Even with the right amount of moisture the pile tends to pack down and squeeze out the oxygen. To counter this problem the pile should be aerated once at least once every two weeks. Use a compost turner, poke holes with a crow bar or broom handle, or try the garden fork. A lid can be helpful for retaining or repelling water.

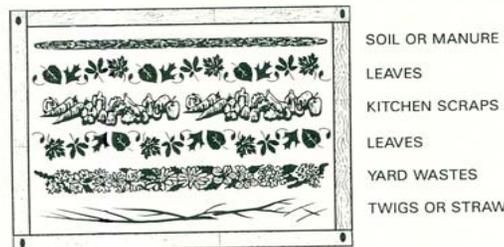
### Carbon-rich materials

Dry leaves  
 Straw and hay

Sawdust  
 Newspaper

## BUILDING THE PILE

Whether using a purchased or hand built container, always start with a layer of twigs or coarse material such as straw to allow for good air circulation. Materials can then be added in layers no more than 10 cm thick. Alternate the kinds of materials used or mix them together. The smaller the materials are chopped or shredded the faster the composting process will work. The pile should not be larger than 3.5 cubic meters.



## COMPOSTING MATERIALS

Materials	Comments
Cardboard	<i>Very high in carbon</i>
Coffee Grounds	<i>Acidic</i>
Cornstalks	<i>Chop and mix with high nitrogen</i>
Dryer lint	
Eggshells	<i>Crush</i>
Feathers	<i>Rich in nitrogen</i>
Grass Clippings	<i>Not from pesticide lawn</i>
treated	
Hair	<i>Not chemically treated hair</i>
Kitchen wastes	
Leaves	
Manure	<i>May bring weed seeds</i>
Mushroom compost	<i>Check if treated with fungicide</i>
Newspaper / Paper	<i>High in carbon, shred finely</i>
Pine cones / Needles	<i>High in carbon, shred finely</i>
Plant trimmings	
Straw and hay	<i>Carbon rich</i>
Tea bags	
Sawdust	<i>Not from treated lumber</i>
Weeds	<i>No weeds with seeds</i>

## MATERIALS TO AVOID

Materials	Comments
Barbecue ashes	<i>Contains sulfur oxides</i>
Diseased plants	<i>Pathogens are only killed at very hot temperatures</i>
Dog, cat feces, kitty Litter	<i>May contain disease organisms</i>
Fish Scraps	<i>Attracts animals</i>
Grease, milk products	<i>Attracts animals, slow to compost</i>
Meat scraps	<i>Attracts animals</i>
Quackgrass	<i>Will grow back again</i>

## COMPOST PROBLEMS

Compost has unpleasant smell.

*Solution: too wet, not enough oxygen: add dry material and aerate.*

Compost smells of ammonia

*Solution: too much nitrogen: add carbon material and mix.*

Compost not working

*Solution: too dry: add water or Not enough nitrogen: add nitrogen rich material and mix.*

Too many flies

*Solution: kitchen waste exposed: cover with dirt, leaves, etc.*

Ants in the pile, building a nest

*Solution: too dry: add water and mix.*

Pale green mould in pile

*Solution: too wet; add dry material.*