

COMPOST USES

Fertilizer

- Compost releases nutrients slowly throughout the growing season and keeps the nutrients from leaching during the rain unlike commercial soluble fertilizers.

As a Mulch

- Reduces weed germination and growth.
- In dense plantings, spread compost 1-3 inches thick over soil between plants.
- In open plantings, spread 4-6 inches thick over soil around plants. **DO NOT** pile compost against plant stems or tree trunks.
- Alternative mulches: grass clippings (weed-free and chemical free), leaves, pine needles, straw, newspaper, bark, and wood chips.



Compost Tea

- Add and stir with equal parts water to make a “tea” for watering gardens, lawns and plants.

Soil Amending

- Mix a 4-6 inch layer of finished compost into newly reclaimed or poor soils. Dig 1-3 inches of compost into garden beds at least once a year.

On House Plants

- Sprinkle a thin layer on top of the plants to provide nutrients. Or you can mix compost, soil and sand together for a great potting soil.

A HEALTHY COMPOST PILE WILL CONTAIN THE “BIG FOUR”:

1. **Browns** are carbon rich, dry, woody materials such as fallen leaves, hay, dried plants and weeds.
2. **Greens** are nitrogen rich, green, moist materials such as kitchen scraps, young weeds, and fresh grass clippings. Your “green” sources contain nitrogen and will help to heat up your pile.
3. **Water** your pile until it is moist but not wet, or the consistency of a wrung-out sponge.
4. **Air**, or oxygen, is added to the pile by turning, or layering with bulky materials to create air spaces between materials. Making sure your pile has air flow will significantly speed up decomposition.



For more information contact:

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Harvesting Your Composter



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WHEN TO HARVEST YOUR COMPOSTER

- Compost is the finished product of decomposition in aerobic conditions by bacteria and organisms.
- When your compost resembles soil then you know it is time to harvest your composter (dark, crumbly, resembles high quality soil).
- When there is no trace of organic material in your compost .
- Most finished compost is found in the centre of the pile.
- It had been suggested that you harvest your composter in the fall. This allows for time for those important nutrients to be released slowly into the soil and be available for the plants in the spring.
- Even if the compost does not appear to be completely finished it still can be placed on garden beds or used as a mulch. Mulch shields from the sun, wind, and rain. Reduces soil compaction, erosion, maintains soil moisture and temperature. It also improves water penetration adding oxygen to roots. In the spring the decomposition will be finished.



TIPS FOR FAST COMPOSTING

“NO FUSS COMPOST” (12-18 months)

- Use thick layer of coarse organic materials such as leaves, straw, or pruning at the bottom of the pile.
- Add kitchen scraps and yard wastes continually.
- In 12-18 months the materials should be composted, use the unfinished materials to start a new batch.



“SOME FUSS COMPOST” (approx. 6 months)

- Use thick layer of coarse organic materials.
- Chop up large pieces of kitchen scraps and yard wastes, moisten materials and bury in the pile.
- Cover the pile with a solid lid.
- Add water when materials are dry.
- Mix fresh grass clippings in or nitrogen rich materials when compost seems slow.
- In about 6 months the materials in the centre of the pile should be composted.

“FUSSY COMPOST” (1-3 months)

- Start pile with layer of small broken twigs, straw or leaves.
- Alternate layers with browns and greens.
- Next day turn the pile.
- Keep adding a balance of greens and browns
- Make sure that the compost pile is moist-like a wrung out sponge.
- Turn the pile every other day or once/week and in 1-3 months you should have compost.

BENEFITS OF COMPOSTING

- **Saves you money** by lowering water and garbage bills and replacing the need for commercial soil and fertilizers.
- **Benefits your garden and container plants** by improving the fertility and health of your soil. Plants grown in healthy soil are more resistant to pests and diseases. As a mulch, compost conserves water, suppresses weeds, and protects the soil from compaction and erosion.
- **Saves water** by helping the soil hold in moisture, reducing evaporation and water runoff.
- **Helps the environment** by recycling valuable organic resources and minimizing the waste going into our landfills.
- **Approximately 50%** of our waste is compostable.

