

GREENING YOUR MIND ABOUT COOKING THE COMPOST

Definition: Composting is the semi-controlled decomposition of organic material (i.e. plant material, animal matter, or food waste) into usable soil.

In our compost, we layer the leafy greens, the brown manure/topsoil, and the food waste in our garden bins. Combining these ingredients fosters bacteria growth which heats up, or cooks, the compost piles. The process of composting can take anywhere from 1 to 8 months, depending on the outside conditions.

To create the most palatable soil, we must

- Aerate the pile by turning the mixture over with a pitchfork;
- Add moisture, so the pile is as damp as a squeezed sponge; and
- Maintain proper carbon to nitrogen ratio of 3-4 lbs. carbon (leaves) to 100 lbs. nitrogen (manure).

Why should I care about compost?

Composting organic matter allows you to

- **RECYCLE** your yard and kitchen waste, which accounts for nearly 30% of the waste stream in the United States;
- **REDUCE** the amount of garbage sent to landfills;
- **ENRICH** your garden soil by improving soil structure, texture, aeration, and water retention (which is especially useful in our sandy environment);
- **PROMOTE** soil fertility, proper pH levels, and healthy root development by mixing compost with your soil.

THE GARDEN RECIPE FOR LAYERED COMPOST

Ingredients:

GREEN LAYER—grass, leaves, shrubbery; NO thorns or woods allowed.

BROWN LAYER—manure, mulch, topsoil; NO sand allowed.

KITCHEN WASTE—most food items, shredded newspapers; NO oils or animal products allowed.

Instructions:

1. Start with the left side of the compost bin. Spread the green layer on the bottom. Add the brown layer, followed by the kitchen waste. Cover with the green layer. Repeat.
2. Shape into a mound (rather than a flat sheet).
3. Turn pile over with a pitchfork whenever you add materials to the compost bin or at least once a week. Return to mounded shape.
4. Add water if the pile is dry. If the pile begins to smell, add more “green layer” ingredients.
5. When the left side of the compost bin has started to decompose visibly, begin a new pile in the right side of the bin. Collect soil as needed.