

## RESOURCES

### FREE WORKSHOPS

The University of California Cooperative Extension, in conjunction with Placer and Nevada Counties, offers practical composting workshops and short courses. Check our website at [ceplacervevada.ucdavis.edu](http://ceplacervevada.ucdavis.edu) for details.

### COMPOSTING BROCHURES

*Worm Composting and Other Methods*

*Recycling Tips for Gardeners*

*Let's Look at Bin Plans (designs)*

### FOR COMPOST QUESTIONS:

Call the University of California Cooperative Extension Master Composter ROTLINE at (530) 889-7399 (Placer Co.), (530) 273-0919 (Nevada Co.), for other RECYCLING INFORMATION, call: Placer County (916) 543-3960 Nevada County (866) 823-6125

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PLACER and NEVADA COUNTIES

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## COMPOST EDUCATION PROGRAM



**T**URN YOUR GARBAGE INTO GOLD! IT'S EASY, IT'S SMART, IT'S RECYCLING.

# BASIC COMPOSTING

## WHY COMPOST?

Composting is nature's way of recycling. It is a satisfying way to turn your fruit, vegetable and yard trimmings into a dark, crumbly, sweet-smelling soil conditioner.

### COMPOSTING:

- ✓ **Saves you money** by lowering garbage bills and replacing store-bought soil conditioners.
- ✓ **Helps garden and house plants** by improving the fertility and health of your soil.
- ✓ **Saves water** by helping the soil hold moisture and reducing water runoff.
- ✓ **Benefits the environment** by recycling valuable organic resources and extending the life of our landfill.



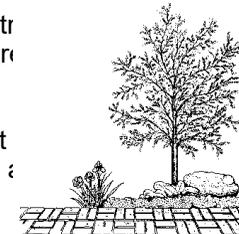
## THE 4 "R'S" OF THE YARD

**R**educe the amount of yard trimmings you make by planting slow-growing, drought-tolerant plants.

**R**euse yard trimmings by grass-cycling (*mowing more often, and leaving the clippings on the lawn*) and by mulching fallen leaves and chipped prunings (*spread them 3-4 inches deep on paths and around trees and shrubs*).

**R**ecycle remaining yard trimmings by *composting*. This brochure shows you how.

**R**estore the environment by planting thriving gardens. It all starts at home!



## COMPOST WORKS FOR YOU

Not only does composting help the environment, but it can help your garden, yard, and house plants too! When compost looks like soil and smells sweet and earthy, it is ready to use. Here are some of the most common ways to use compost:

### IN THE GARDEN

Before planting, mix a 3-4 inch layer of compost into newly reclaimed or poor soils. Mix a ½ -3 inch layer of compost into annual garden beds at least once year. Compost will add nutrients and beneficial microbes, hold water, and improve plant growth.



### AROUND THE YARD

Spread a 1-4 inch layer of coarse compost on soil, or spread a ½-inch layer of sifted, weed-seed-free compost on turf grass as a topdressing. These can be done any time of year to improve soil fertility and reduce watering needs.



### ON HOUSEPLANTS

Sprinkle a thin layer of compost over houseplant soil to provide nutrients. You can also make a great potting soil by mixing one part compost with one part sand, one part ground bark and one part soil or peat moss.



### DON'T HAVE A GARDEN?

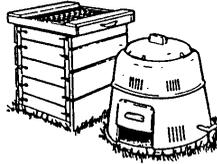
You can still make compost and use it on a house plant, give it to a friend, sprinkle it around a street tree, or use it in a community garden.

## CHOOSE A SYSTEM

### SYSTEMS FOR FOOD & YARD TRIMMINGS

#### Bins

- ✓ For fruit, vegetable, and yard trimmings (using "Mixed" compost recipe).
- ✓ For yard trimmings alone (using "No-Fuss" recipe).
- ✓ Bins require a lid, floor, and no holes bigger than 1/4-inch in diameter.



#### Open Piles & Simple Bins

- ✓ For yard trimmings.
- ✓ Requires "Active" composting (chopping and weekly turning to keep animals out).
- ✓ Usually inexpensive or free.
- ✓ Bury food waste in the middle of the pile, cover with 6-12 inches of plant material.

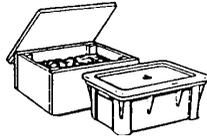
### SYSTEMS FOR JUST FOOD TRIMMINGS

For more information about the following, see the brochure, *Worm Composting*.



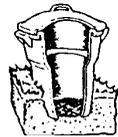
#### Worm Bins

- ✓ Most Fun! Takes some time and effort.
- ✓ For indoors or outdoors.
- ✓ Produces excellent fertilizer.



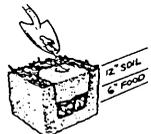
#### Closed-Air Systems

- ✓ Low maintenance.
- ✓ Prone to odor and insect problems.



#### Underground Composting

- ✓ Requires digging a hole each time you add new materials.
- ✓ No harvesting necessary.



## FOLLOW THE BASICS

Browns
DO COMPOST
Greens

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Most sawdusts</li> <li>✓ Chopped, woody prunings</li> <li>✓ Pine needles</li> <li>✓ Fallen leaves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Tea bags</li> <li>✓ Citrus rinds</li> <li>✓ Coffee grounds and filters</li> <li>✓ Lawn clippings and young weeds</li> <li>✓ Fruit and vegetable trimmings</li> </ul>
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### DON'T COMPOST

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Meat, bones or fish</li> <li>✓ Dairy products or grease</li> <li>✓ Dog, cat or bird feces</li> <li>✓ Sawdust from plywood / treated wood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Diseased plants</li> <li>✓ Pernicious weeds such as Bermuda grass, ivy, oxalis bulbs, burr clover</li> </ul>
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Thanks to friendly bugs and worms, compost is as easy as "1-2-3" - no matter which recipe you use.

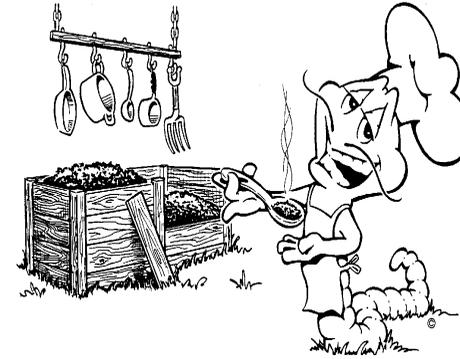
**1 CHOP** materials if you want them to break down more quickly.

**2 MIX** "brown" (dry, wood materials) with "greens" (moist, green materials).

**3 MAINTAIN** air and water balance by keeping compost as moist as a wrung-out sponge.

**Browns, Greens, Air & Water are the big four that will keep every compost pile happy.**

**HOT COMPOST HAPPENS** when you follow the basic "1-2-3" carefully, and the pile is about a cubic yard (3'x3'x3'). Heat can accelerate composting and kill weed seeds and plant diseases, but is not necessary. Cold, slow piles are just as good. If your pile is large enough, moist, and well chopped, but not heating up, you can turn it and mix in some greens like grass clippings or an organic nitrogen fertilizer. For faster, hot, composting and better weed-seed kill, turn or mix your hot pile about once a week.



### "MIXED" COMPOST

#### Ingredients:

Fruit, vegetable and yard trimmings (browns and greens), water as needed.



#### Directions:

**Feed** yard trimmings to your pile as you generate them by chopping them first into pieces 6" or smaller. Food scraps need to be buried and mixed into the center of the pile. NEVER dump and run! Be sure to mix in enough browns to balance your greens. Feed as often as you like.

**Maintain** compost by turning or mixing it about once a week. Keep it moist as a wrung-out sponge.

**Harvest** rich, brown, finished compost by sifting out coarse, unfinished materials after 3 to 8 months.

### "NO-FUSS" COMPOST

For yard trimmings:

#### Ingredients:

Yard trimmings only (browns and greens), water as needed.

#### Directions:

**Feed** chopped or unchopped yard trimmings into bin as you generate them.

**Maintain** compost keeping it moist as a wrung-out sponge.

**Harvest** rich, brown, finished compost from the bottom and center of the pile after 12 to 18 months.



## TROUBLESHOOTING

Symptoms	Problems	Solutions
<b>Pile not composting</b>	Too dry	Add water until slightly damp and turn (mix).
	Too much brown water	Add fresh green matter or organic nitrogen fertilizer and turn.
<b>Pile smells rotten / attracts flies</b>	Too wet / too many food scraps or lawn clippings	Turn and add browns (dry, wood materials) or dry soil.
	Food scraps exposed	Bury and mix food scraps into pile.
	Non-compostables	Remove meat, dairy, grease, etc. and turn.
<b>Rodents in pile</b>	Food scraps in open bin / holes larger than 1/4-inch / non-compostables	Use traps or baits, rodent-proof bin, remove meat, grease, etc. and turn.