

## rapid compost technique

- Build a 3'x3'x3' pile with equal amounts of browns and greens.
- Chop materials to increase surface area for microorganisms to decompose the browns and greens.
- Turn the pile every 3 days at first, then weekly. Add water as needed to keep as moist as a wrung-out sponge.
- Start saving ingredients for the next pile.
- Finished compost looks like rich, brown soil. The original ingredients cannot be identified.
- Compost should be finished in 6 to 8 weeks.
- Screen compost through a 1/2-1" screen over a wheelbarrow; throw larger pieces back

## slow compost technique

- Add chopped and unchopped yard materials as they are generated. Keep materials as moist as a wrung-out sponge.
- Turn as desired.
- Harvest composted matter from the bottom of the pile in 12 to 18 months.

## mixed compost technique

- Mix fruit, vegetable, and yard trimmings. Be sure to add both browns and greens. If necessary add water until slightly damp.
- Feed yard trimmings to your pile as you generate them. First chop them into pieces 6" or smaller.
- Bury food scraps 6-12" deep in the heart of the pile. Never dump and run. Feed pile as often as you like.
- Turn compost with a pitch fork or mix it about once a week. Keep it as moist as a wrung-out sponge.
- Harvest rich, brown, finished compost after 3 to 8 months. Sift out coarse, unfinished materials and return them to the pile.

Always wear gloves  
when handling compost.

TROUBLESHOOTING		
SYMPTOM	PROBLEM	RECOMMENDATION
• Pile not composting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too dry/too wet</li> <li>• Too much brown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add water only until slightly damp; turn if too wet.</li> <li>• Add fresh matter or organic nitrogen fertilizer; turn.</li> </ul>
• Pile smells rotten	• Too wet/too many food scraps or lawn clippings	• Turn and add browns.
• Attracts flies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food scraps exposed</li> <li>• Non-compostables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bury and mix food scraps 6-12" into heart of pile.</li> <li>• Remove meat, dairy, grease, etc. and turn pile.</li> </ul>
• Rodents in pile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food scraps exposed</li> <li>• Bin holes larger than 1/2"</li> <li>• Non-compostables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use traps or baits; rodent-proof bin; remove meat, grease, etc.; bury food; turn pile.</li> </ul>

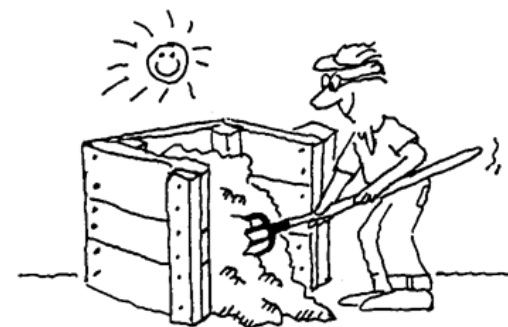
Source Material:  
ANR Publication 8367  
ANR Publication 8037  
CA Master Gardener Handbook  
UC Cooperative Extension Sacramento



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MASTER GARDENERS

# Backyard Composting



LEARN HOW TO RECYCLE FRUIT,  
VEGETABLES, AND YARD TRIMMINGS  
INTO A BLACK GOLD SOIL AMENDMENT  
FOR YOUR GARDEN

UC Cooperative Extension  
Fresno County  
Master Gardeners



## Why compost?

- Composting is nature's way to turn fruit, vegetable, and yard trimmings into a dark, crumbly, sweet-smelling soil conditioner.
- Composting benefits the environment by recycling organic resources and extending the life of landfills.
- Composting may save money by lowering garbage bills and replacing store bought soil conditioners.
- Compost improves the water-holding capacity of soil, decreasing water needs.
- Compost helps to keep clay soil from compacting. Soil is easier to work and root systems will develop better.
- Compost gives sandy soil needed structure.



## Choose a system

Bins, drums, and open piles:

- Can be manufactured, purchased, or easily made at home using concrete blocks, garbage cans, scrap wood, and wood pallets.
- The optimal bin size is 3'x3'x3' (a cubic yard) to 5'x5'x5'.
- Bins require air holes.

## Begin composting . . . . It's as easy as 1, 2, 3

1. **Chop** materials. They will break down faster.
2. **Mix** *BROWNS* (dry, woody materials) with *GREENS* (moist, green materials).
3. Maintain air and water balance by keeping compost as moist as a wrung-out sponge.

**Compost happens . . .** As microorganisms (bacteria, fungi) and macro organisms (worms, insects, and their relatives) break down the contents of a compost pile. Supplying them with their basic needs of food, water, and air will speed up the compost process.

## Follow the basics

### Do compost

BROWNS (CARBON)	GREENS (NITROGEN)
Dry Leaves	Grass
Eggshells	Grass Clippings
Straw	Herbivore Manures
Coffee Filters	Flowers
Hair, lint	Sawdust
Wood Shavings	Coffee Grounds
Pine Needles	Green Leaves
Shredded Newspaper	Young Weeds - no seeds
Chopped woody prunings	Tea Leaves/ Bags Sod

### Don't compost

- Meat, bones, or fish
- Dairy products or grease
- Dog, cat, or bird feces
- Sawdust from plywood or treated wood
- Invasive weeds or plants (Bermuda grass, ivy, oxalis)
- Diseased plants