



## Compost Troubleshooting Guide

Symptom	Problem	Solution
Bad odor (rotten smell)	Too much moisture	Turn the compost or add dry, porous material like straw
Bad odor (ammonia smell)	Too much nitrogen compared to carbon	Add high-carbon materials like straw, sawdust, wood chips
	Compacted leaves	Turn the compost or make the pile smaller
	Inadequate air	Turn the compost
Low compost temperature	Pile too small	Increase size, insulate sides
	Too little moisture	Add water and turn the compost
	Too much moisture	Turn the compost and mix in dry materials
	Too little air	Turn the compost
	Lack of nitrogen	Mix in nitrogen source: grass clippings, manure, or organic nitrogen fertilizer
	Cold weather	Increase pile size or insulate pile with layer of straw or plastic
	Particle size too large	Chip or grind materials
Pile is dry throughout	Not enough water; too much wood material	Turn pile and moisten material; add fresh materials; cover pile
Compost pile is damp and warm in middle but nowhere else	Pile is too small	Collect more material and mix the old ingredients into a new pile
Pest infestation: dogs, rodents, insects	Improper food scraps added	Don't add meat, fats, bones or other animal products
	Food scraps not covered	Place fruit and vegetable scraps in the center of pile, cover with soil. Use rodent-proof closed-air bins or compost with worms
Neighbor complains	Compost pile is ugly	Construct covered bin system to keep it neat
Worm bin smells bad	Not enough air circulation	Add fresh bedding
	Improper food scraps	Remove meat, bones or other dairy products
	Too much food	Feed worms less
Worms are dying	Not enough food	Add food into bedding
	Bin too dry	Moisten contents until slightly damp
	Bin too wet	Add bedding
	Bedding is eaten; too many castings	Harvest castings and add fresh bedding
Fly infestation	Food exposed	Secure lid with latches Line bin with weather stripping Cover food scraps with bedding Cover worms and bedding with sheet of moist newspaper
Ant infestation	Food accessible	Coat legs of bin with a pest barrier Set legs in cans of water or mineral oil

*Advice to grow by . . . ask us.*

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