Resources

Free Workshops
Pre-registration preferred for our composting workshops. See current schedule on our website www.ucanr.edu/compost

Books
Let it Rot! Stu Campbell, Garden Way Publishing, Pownal, VT, 144 pp

About the Master Composter Program
The Composting Education Program teaches a 17 week training course in organic waste management to interested volunteers. Training consist of approximately 50 hours of classroom and hands-on instruction. Volunteers agree to give back 50 hours of volunteer service in the form of educational outreach.

Rotline: 408-918-4640
Website: www.ucanr.edu/compost

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 amendment that has positive effect on the environment!

- 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 landfills

Working with compost!
Not only does composting 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 4” to 8” layer of compost into newly reclaimed or poor soils. Mix a 1/2” to 3” layer of compost into annual garden beds at least once a year. Compost will add nutrients and beneficial microbes, hold water and improve growth.

Around the Yard:
Spread a 1” to 6” layer of coarse compost on soil as a mulch, or spread a 1/2” layer of sifted, seed-free compost on turfgrass as a topdressing. These can be done anytime of year to improve soil fertility and reduce water needs.

On House Plants:
Sprinkle a thin layer of compost over house plants to provide nutrients. You can also make a great potting soil by mixing one part compost with two parts sand and/or soil.

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 community garden.

Basic Composting
Turn your garbage into gold!

In the Garden:
Before planting, mix a 4” to 8” layer of compost into newly reclaimed or poor soils. Mix a 1/2” to 3” layer of compost into annual garden beds at least once a year. Compost will add nutrients and beneficial microbes, hold water and improve growth.

Reduce – the amount of yard trimmings you make by planting slow-growing, drought-tolerant plants
Reuse – yard trimmings by grasscycling (mowing more often and leaving the clippings on the lawn) and by mulching fallen leaves and chipped prunings
Recycle – remaining yard trimmings by composting. This brochure shows you how.
Restore – the environment with thriving gardens. It all starts at home.
Choose a System

Systems for Food & Yard Trimmings

Rodent-resistant bins
- For fruit, vegetable & yard trimmings (using "mixed" compost recipe)
- For yard trimmings alone (using "no-fuss" recipe)
- Bins require sides, lid & no holes bigger than 1/4"

Open piles & simple bins
- For yard trimmings ONLY
- Requires "active" composting (chopping & regular turning to keep animals out)
- Usually inexpensive or free

SYSTEMS FOR JUST FOOD WASTE

For more information, see the Worm Composting & Other Methods brochure.

Worm bins
- Most fun! Takes some time & effort
- For indoors or outdoors
- Produces excellent vermicompost

Remember... Whenever you compost fruit & vegetable trimmings, use a container with sides, lid, and no holes bigger than 1/4", or bury food scraps at least one foot under soil surface.

Follow the Basics

Thanks to friendly bugs and worms, composting is as "1-2-3" - no matter which recipe you use!

1. **CHOP** materials if you want them to break-down more quickly.
2. **MIX** "browns" (dry, woody materials) with "greens" (moist, green materials)
3. **MAINTAIN** air & 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DO COMPOST</th>
<th>DON'T COMPOST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most sawdusts, Chopped, woody prunings, Pine needles, Fallen leaves, Tea bags, Citrus rinds, Coffee grounds &amp; filters, Lawn clippings &amp; young weeds, Fruit &amp; vegetable trimmings, Herbivore manures</td>
<td>Meat, bones, or fish, Dairy products or grease, Grains, beans, or breads, Dog, cat, or bird feces, Sawdust from plywood/treated wood, Diseased plants (in cold piles), Fruit &amp; vegetable trimmings (in open piles/ simple bins)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hot compost happens** when you follow the basic "1-2-3" carefully, and the pile is about a cubic yard (3x3x3). Heat can accelerate composting and destroy 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 seed destruction, turn or mix and water your hot pile about once a week.

Compost Recipes

For Rodent-Resistant Bins

"No-Fuss" Compost:

For yard trimmings ONLY. Requires a rodent-resistant bin to prevent animal nesting.

**Ingredients:** Yard trimmings only (browns & greens), water as needed.

**Directions:** Feed chopped or unchopped yard trimmings into bin as you generate them. Maintain compost by 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.

"Mixed" Compost:

For fruit, vegetable & yard trimmings together. This recipe requires a rodent-resistant bin and active maintenance to prevent animal nesting and feeding.

**Ingredients:** Fruit, vegetable & yard trimmings (browns & greens), water as needed.

**Directions:** Feed yard trimmings to your compost by chopping them into small pieces (woody material 1 in diameter or smaller) or grind them, then mix them into the pile. Fill the bin. Food scraps need to be buried and mixed into the center of the pile. Never dump and spread. Be sure to balance browns with greens. Maintain pile by turning or mixing it once a week. Keep it moist as a wrung-out sponge. Covering it with a tarp will help keep it moist. Harvest rich, brown, finished compost by sifting out coarse, unfinished materials after 3 to 8 months.

Troubleshooting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pile not composting</td>
<td>Too dry</td>
<td>Add water until slightly damp &amp; turn (mix)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too much brown matter</td>
<td>Add fresh green matter or organic nitrogen fertilizer &amp; turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pile smells rotten/ attracts flies</td>
<td>Too wet/ too many food scraps or lawn clippings</td>
<td>Turn &amp; add browns (dry, woody materials &amp; dry soil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food scraps exposed</td>
<td>Bury &amp; mix food scraps into pile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>See &quot;Don’t Compost&quot;</td>
<td>Remove meat, dairy, grease, etc &amp; turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodents in pile</td>
<td>Food scraps in open bin/holes larger than 1/4 in non-compostables</td>
<td>Use traps or baits rodent-proof bin, remove meat, grease, etc &amp; turn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A recipe for open piles

"Active" compost:

For yard trimmings ONLY. In open piles & simple bins, active maintenance prevents animal nesting.

**Ingredients:** Yard trimmings only (browns & greens), water as needed.

**Directions:** Feed yard trimmings to your compost by chopping them into small pieces (woody material 1 in diameter or smaller) or grind them, then mix them into the pile. Fill the bin. Be sure to balance browns with greens. Maintain pile by turning or mixing it once a week. Keep it moist as a wrung-out sponge. Covering it with a tarp will help keep it moist. Harvest rich, brown, finished compost by sifting out coarse, unfinished materials after 3 to 8 months.