

More Information

Books

Rodale Book of Composting, Organic Gardening Staff, Rodale Press, Emmaus, PA.

Worms Eat My Garbage, Mary Appelhof, Flower Press, Kalamazoo, MI.



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Information in this brochure provided by the UCCE Master Gardener Program of Napa County.

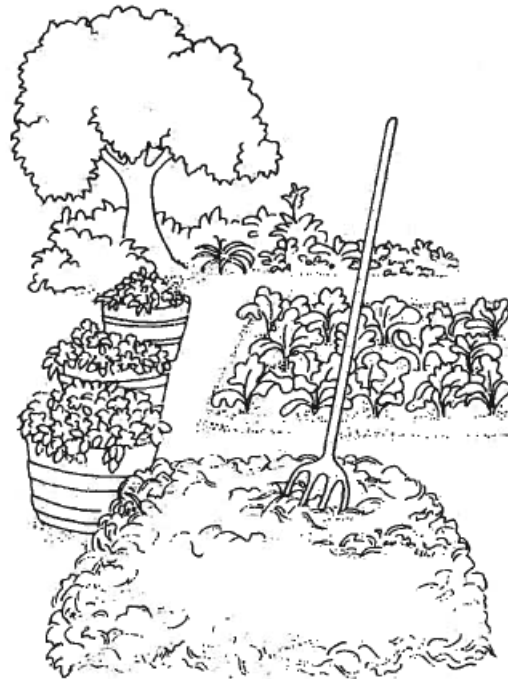
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HOME COMPOSTING in Lake County



*Turning Garbage
into Gold*

UC Cooperative Extension
Master Gardener Program
of Lake County

Why Compost?

Composting is an easy, environmentally beneficial way to turn yard and kitchen wastes into a dark, crumbly, sweet-smelling soil amendment that will build your soil, increase garden production, and do wonders for your landscaping.

Composting will:

- **Save You Money** by lowering garbage bills and replacing the need for commercial soil amendments.
- **Increase Production** by improving the fertility and health of your soil.
- **Save Water** by helping the soil hold moisture and reducing water runoff.
- **Benefit the Environment** by recycling valuable organic resources and extending the lives of our landfills.

What Can You Compost?

sawdust/straw
chopped prunings
shredded paper
shredded cardboard
papertowels/tissues
pine needles
dry leaves/weeds
coffee grounds/teabags

DRY BROWNS

garden refuse
green leaves/weeds
fruit/vegetable trimmings
manures
grass clippings

MOIST GREENS

Food Wastes should be composted only in worm-boxes, or by burying small amounts at least one foot deep in a compost pile or in ground.

Do Not Compost meat and bones, dairy products, or greasy foods, dog & cat feces, unchopped wood, diseased or invasive plants.

Using Compost



Compost can be added to the soil at any time. Compost helps keep plants healthy, improves soil structure, adds a wide variety of minerals needed for plant growth, and holds moisture, plant nutrients, and beneficial soil organisms.

Amend Soil naturally with compost. Mix a 4"-6" layer of compost deep into newly reclaimed or poor soils. Dig 1"-3" of compost into annual garden beds at least once a year.



Mulching is a smart way to use compost during the growing season. Spread compost 1"-3" thick over soil around plants. Do not pile it against plant stems. Compost used this way will add nutrients, protect the soil, save water and help deter weeds.

Potting Mix can be made by mixing equal parts of compost, perlite and soil. Be sure compost is fully decomposed. Mix by screening before using.



Composting "1-2-3"

The bugs, fungi, bacteria, and worms in your yard or worm box do most of the composting for you. Whatever recipe you choose, it's as easy as 1-2-3!

1. **Chop** compostables. The more you chop, the faster the decomposition process will go.
2. **Mix** dry, brown, carbon-rich, material, with moist, green nitrogen-rich material for a balance of nutrients. Equal volumes of green and brown.
3. **Water** the materials as you build the pile, then keep the pile as damp as a wrung-out sponge. This speeds the decomposition process.

No-Fuss Compost

This is the easiest way to compost yard wastes as they accumulate.

Ingredients:

Yard wastes*, some water as needed.

Directions:

In a heap, hoop, or bin, layer chopped yard wastes as they accumulate. Water as needed, so compost is kept moist as a wrung out sponge. In 12 to 18 months, the material at the bottom and center of the pile will be dark, crumbly compost. Screen, and use the uncomposted material to start a new batch.

*When using grass clippings, mix them with dry, brown materials to prevent compaction.

Fast Compost

The fastest way to compost is to build a "hot" pile in a heap, hoop, or bin. This requires frequent turning of the pile.

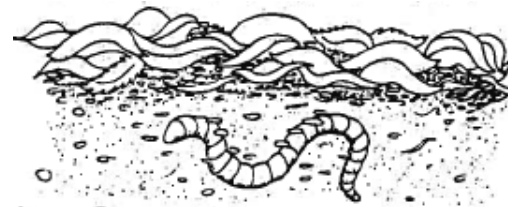
Ingredients:

Yard wastes*, some water as needed.

Directions:

Layer and mix 50% moist-green with 50% dry-brown (equal volumes of green and brown) materials until you have a cubic yard (3' x 3' x 3'). Keep pile about as moist as a wrung-out sponge. Turn the pile one to three times a week to give it the air it needs for clean, fast composting. If the pile has too many brown ingredients and is not decomposing, mix in fresh green materials like grass clippings or add organic nitrogen fertilizer.

Compost is ready to use in 2-15 weeks. Sift, and use any undecomposed material to start a new pile.



Worm Compost

Worm composting will turn food wastes into a rich fertilizer and soil amendment.

Ingredients:

Food wastes, newspaper, red worms

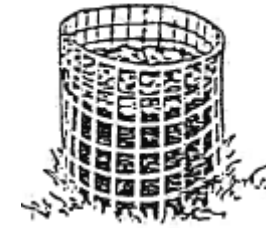
Directions:

Make a layer of shredded cardboard or newspapers (black and white only) six inches deep in the box, with enough water to make it damp as a wrung-out sponge. Add worms, food waste (no animal products) as generated and shredded newspapers as needed. Keep the box between 50 and 75 degrees, out of direct sun. Worm compost is ready after 3-6 months. For more information on worm compost, see our pamphlet, "Worm Composting."

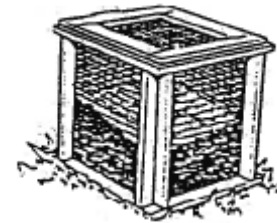
Compost Structures

Hoops, bins, buckets, and worm boxes can help you fit your compost into small spaces. Choose a structure that is the right size, style, cost, and effort level for you. Remember to use recycled materials or containers whenever possible.

Hoops are easy and fairly inexpensive to build, and help to keep your compost pile tidy. Secure the hoop with hooks or twists of wire. To speed composting, undo the hoop, set it up next to the pile, and turn the pile back into the cage in its new location. Nonclimb fencing makes a good hoop.



Bins hold yard waste compost and, when made rodent-proof, work well for food wastes. Home-built bins can be inexpensive and attractive. A removable front provides easy access to compost. Many styles are commercially available.



Worm Boxes are excellent for composting food wastes indoors or outdoors. They are very convenient for small spaces. Be sure there are holes in the bottom or small gaps between the boards (not larger than 1/4 inch) to allow air to circulate. The box should be shallower than it is wide and have a secure lid to exclude flies, rodents and pets.



Compost Troubleshooting

Symptoms	Problems	Solutions
Pile not composting	Too dry	Moisten until slightly damp
	Lack of oxygen	Turn to aerate
	Too much dry brown material	Turn, add fresh green materials or organic nitrogen fertilizer
Pile smells rotten and/or attracts flies	Too wet	Turn, add dry brown materials
	Non-compostables present	Remove meat, grease, etc & turn
Rodents in pile	Food wastes in open bin, holes larger than 1/4 inch	Turn compost and rodent-proof your bin
	Non-compostables present	Remove meat, grease, etc. and turn