

Down and Dirty: The Simple Beauty of Composting

Composting – an amazing, natural process! Here's why we love it:

It's not complicated or difficult.

We are sending less to the landfill (and saving money on trash collection).

Our regular trash isn't wet or smelly.

We improve our soil without using commercial chemicals in our gardens.

It reduces production of the greenhouse gas methane in landfills.



To get started, you will need:

1. A place (and possibly) an outdoor container: Choose a spot in your yard for a compost pile, or use one of the many bins available commercially. DIYers might construct a bin with chicken wire.
2. A kitchen container to collect food scraps. It should suit your needs in terms of size (consider family size and how often you want to empty it). It should also be easy to clean and have a lid.
3. Compost materials (both are needed):
 - **Greens (nitrogen)** - food waste, coffee grounds, grass clippings, garden waste
 - **Browns (carbon)** - dry leaves, straw, wood chips

NOTE: Do **NOT** add: animal waste, meat and bones, dairy, newspapers



What you will do:

Once you have set up your bin or pile, simply add compost material as you collect it in your kitchen or yard. Stir or tumble the material periodically (if you are in a hurry to make the final product, stir more frequently). It should be damp, not soaking wet. Then, be patient and let the composting begin!

Troubleshooting: Observe the mixture on a regular basis.

- Strong odor - too much nitrogen or not enough air. Turn the pile and add brown matter, such as dry leaves, as you turn it.
- Slow composting - too much carbon. Add green matter such as grass clippings.
- Soggy mixture - too much water. Uncover pile to allow evaporation; add dry materials to absorb water.
- Tightly packed material - too little air to allow decomposition. Stir or tumble pile.