

**Compost Uses:**

- **Soil Additives** - improves moisture retention, improves texture. Use around garden beds, trees, shrubs or sprinkle on your lawn.

- **House Plants** - use 1/2 to 1/3 of container volume instead of soil.

**Why Should I Make Compost?**

- Composting is easy.
- It is a great way to recycle your organic yard and kitchen waste.
- It saves money on peat and fertilizer.
- It improves the soil.
- It is the best alternative, it prevents landfilling or burning.

**For More Information**

Call Your Local Cooperative Extension Office listed in your telephone Directory

**Write to:**

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
Division of Solid & Hazardous Materials  
Bureau of Solid Waste, Reduction & Recycling  
625 Broadway  
Albany, New York 12233-7253

**or email us at:**

dshmwrr@gw.dec.state.ny.us

**and check out our web page at:**

www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/294.html

**TROUBLESHOOTING YOUR COMPOST PILE**



**SYMPTOM**

Rotten odor.

**PROBLEM**

Not enough air  
Too much water

**SOLUTION**

Turn the mixture.  
Add dry materials.

Low pile temperature.

Pile too dry  
Pile too small  
Lack of air  
Lack of nitrogen

Moisten materials while turning the pile  
Make the pile larger.  
Turn the pile.  
Add grass clippings, manure or ammonium sulfate.

The compost is damp & warm in the middle, but nowhere else.

Too small  
Uneven mixture

Add more materials & turn.  
Turn and mix the pile.



NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

# Easy Backyard Composting



Printed on 100% Post-Consumer Recycled Paper

## EASY BACKYARD COMPOSTING

### What Is Compost?

Compost is a dark, crumbly, earthy-smelling mixture that consists mostly of decayed organic matter. It is a simple, natural process - nature's way of recycling nutrients and returning them to the soil.



### What Can I Compost?

- Yard wastes, such as fallen leaves, grass clippings, weeds and the remains of garden plants.
- Kitchen scraps EXCEPT FOR meat, fish, bones and fatty foods (such as cheese, salad dressing and leftover cooking oil).

### How Do I Make A Compost Pile?

It's easy! To build a simple compost bin, you can do any of the following:

- Use 10 feet of small-mesh wire fencing or snow fencing shaped into a square, circle or a rectangle.
- Buy a bin at a local hardware or garden center.
- Don't use a bin at all, but have a sheltered, free standing pile.

### To Start Your Compost Pile

Compost piles work best if they have the right balance of materials. Ingredients should be:

**Browns** (carbon source) - Leaves, Straw, Wood chips, Sawdust.



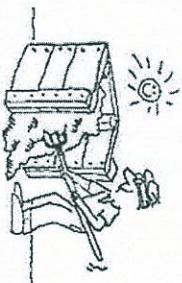
**Greens** (nitrogen source) - Fruit & Vegetable Wastes, Coffee Grounds, (Kitchen scraps should be added to the center of the waste layers where heat will be the greatest), Grass Clippings and/or Manure

**That's All There Is To It!** Just remember:

**Turn the pile** - The more you turn it the faster it works.

**Water the pile.** - A compost pile should be kept damp - but not soggy - especially during dry spells.

**Be patient!** It will take six months to a year before the compost is ready for use.



### Composting Do's And Don't

**DO** add lime, small amounts of wood ashes or crushed eggshells to the compost pile to neutralize acids which may form and cause an odor problem.

**DO** mix grass clippings with other wastes to loosen them up. They have a tendency to compact.



**DO** keep compost pile damp, especially during dry spells.

**DON'T** use unfinished compost. It will rob your plants of nitrogen instead of acting as a fertilizer.

**DON'T** compost weeds that are heavily laden with seeds. Some seeds will not be killed during the heating process.

**DON'T** add meat, fish, bones or fatty food scraps to the compost mixture. They will attract animals & do not decompose readily.

**DON'T** add diseased vegetable plants to the pile if the compost will be used on a vegetable garden. The diseased organisms may reappear the following year.