



Composting Made Simple

Composting is a lot easier than you may think. Organic material breaks down around us in nature all the time. Composting is just a method of speeding up the process!

Most compost bin designs are so simple they can be built in a few hours. Once you gather your yard waste & form it into a pile, the only time you'll spend is for occasional maintenance. Then sit back & let nature do the rest!

CHOOSE A COMPOSTING BIN

Used Pallet Bin - Used pallets can easily be wired together to form a bin. Construct bins with removable fronts or sides so that yard materials can be easily turned with a pitchfork.

Woven Wire Bin - Purchase a length of woven wire & fasten the ends with several small chain snaps (available at any hardware store) to make a circle.

To calculate the length of wire needed, lay a piece of string around the outside of the pile & measure it. For a 4'x4'x4' compost pile, purchase 16' of woven wire.

Block or Brick Bin

Pile up bricks, cement blocks, or rocks to form three sides of a square container. Lay the blocks without mortar, leaving spaces between to let air circulate.

CHOOSE A COMPOSTING SYSTEM

EASY COMPOSTING - Yard Trimmings

Ingredients:

- Yard trimmings (greens & browns)
- Water

Directions:

- Feed chipped or unchipped yard trimmings into the bin or pile as you generate them.
- Maintain compost by keeping it as moist as a wrung-out sponge.
- Harvest rich, brown compost from the bottom & center of the pile after 12-18 months.

MIXED COMPOSTING - Fruit &

vegetable waste & yard trimmings

Ingredients:

- Fruit, vegetable & yard trimmings (greens & browns)
- Water

Directions:

- Put yard trimmings in your pile as you generate them.
- Chop materials into pieces 6" or smaller for faster composting.
- Bury food scraps in the middle of the pile to avoid rodents or pests.
- Layer browns & greens together.
- Maintain compost by watering as needed to keep the pile as moist as a wrung-out sponge.

- Turning the pile about once a week will speed up the process, but it is not necessary to produce compost.
- Harvest rich finished compost by sifting out coarse, unfinished material after 3-8 months.
- Use the unfinished material to continue your pile.

HOT COMPOSTING

Hot composting follows the basic Mixed Composting 1-2-3 method & uses a larger pile (at least 3'x3'x3'). Under these conditions, heat builds up quickly & the pile decomposes faster than a small pile. To speed up the process even further, you can turn the pile once a week. However, hot piles are not necessary. Cold, slow piles will still help recycle food & yard wastes, just at a slower rate.

VERMICOMPOSTING uses worms to process organic material. Vermicomposting can be done inside, so it's a great option for those living in apartments or school groups.

Materials

1. Bin for worms
2. Biodegradable bedding
3. Worms
4. Food waste

Access more [#ScrapLikeALion](https://www.wisconsinliions.org) resources @ [wisconsinliions.org](https://www.wisconsinliions.org)

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Composting Made Simple cont.



Bin

Choose a metal, untreated wood or plastic bin less than 18" deep with a large surface area. Allow two square feet of bin space for every person in your household or classroom. Drill ¼" wide drainage holes in the bottom of your container.

The Bedding

Use light, fluffy, biodegradable materials free from pesticides or chemicals (i.e. thinly shredded newsprint or computer paper or shredded cardboard). Plan on 5-8 pounds of bedding for a 2'x2' box; 9-13 pounds for a 2'x3' box. Pour in three pints of water per pound of dry bedding & mix well.

Worms

Vermicomposting uses a special kind of worm called redworms, which eat a large amount of food waste & live well in captivity. Do not use nightcrawlers or other garden worms.

Redworms can be purchased from growers, bait shops, some garden centers or online. One pound of worms can process up to a half pound of organic material per day. For a 2'x2' bin, use one pound of worms.

Food

Worms are not picky eaters; they will munch happily on most organic waste you would put in your compost pile. To get started, feed your worms peels & other vegetable waste, coffee grounds & tea leaves, plate scraps, egg shells & spoiled foods (not dairy). To begin vermicomposting, bury organic materials into the bedding

& sprinkle worms on top. Add food waste as you create it, but be careful to not put in more than your worms can eat. After 3-4 months your worms will be thriving & you will be able to harvest castings for use on your lawn or houseplants.

For more information about vermicomposting, see dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eek/earth/recycle/compost2.htm

USING FINISHED COMPOST

Compost is ready to harvest when it is reduced to a crumbly, sweet smelling material called humus. If some pieces are not decomposed, you can sift those out & use them to start a new batch. Compost improves soil structure, holds in moisture & plant nutrients, & promotes strong, healthy root systems for plant growth. Here are the most common ways to use compost:

Mix It Into Soil

- Mix 2" of compost into the top 6-8" of:
 - lawn soil before seeding for grass
 - garden soil before planting
- Spread a 2-3" blanket of compost onto the soil of exposed sloping areas to help fight erosion

Use It As A Mulch

Add compost as a mulch around flowers, shrubs, & trees to discourage weeds, help soil retain moisture, & protect roots from alternate freezing & thawing during winter months.

TROUBLE SHOOTING

BAD ODOR

Problem Not enough air circulation, or too much green material

Solution Mix the pile, or add in more brown material

COMPOSTS TOO SLOWLY

Problem Not enough water

Solution Moisten & mix the pile

PILE IS DAMP & WARM ONLY IN CENTER

Problem Pile is too small

Solution Collect more material & mix it into the pile

PILE IS DAMP & SWEET-SMELLING BUT NO HEAT

Problem Not enough green material

Solution Mix in more green material like fresh grass clippings, yard trimmings & weeds



#Scrap Like A Lion

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Composting Recipes

Composting is so much more than fertilizer...

Compost is soil amendment that improves soil health, which in turn can lead to healthier plants.

- Saves you money by reducing the need for expensive bags & commercial soil amendments
- Improves the fertility & health of your soil
- Saves water by helping the soil hold moisture & reducing water runoff
- Benefits the environment by recycling valuable organic resources & extending the lives of our landfills

THE BOTTOM LINE

Composting saves you money, improves your yard & gardens & benefits the environment.

INGREDIENTS

- Green - yard waste: grass clippings, green yard trimmings, weeds; fruit & vegetable scraps
- Brown - yard waste: leaves, small brush & twigs (1/2" diameter or less), woody plant prunings, sawdust
- Water (as needed)

COMPOSTING DIRECTIONS

- Mix 1 part green with 2-3 parts of brown
 - Layer your yard waste in a heap or bin as it accumulates
 - For faster composting, chop it up first with a hoe or lawn mower
- Water to keep as moist as a wrung-out sponge
- Turn periodically
- In 6 to 18 months, the material at the bottom & center of the pile will be dark, crumbly compost. Sift, then use the uncomposted material to start a new batch.

FAST COMPOST DIRECTIONS

- Mix 1 part green with 2-3 parts of brown to form a pile
 - Average size is 4' x 4' x 4'
 - For faster composting, chop it up first with a hoe or lawn mower
- Mix in 1" of soil
- Water to keep as moist as a wrung-out sponge
- Turn the pile weekly to let air in.
- Finished compost will take between 12 weeks to 1 year, depending on how often you turn it & how well you maintain pile moisture



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