

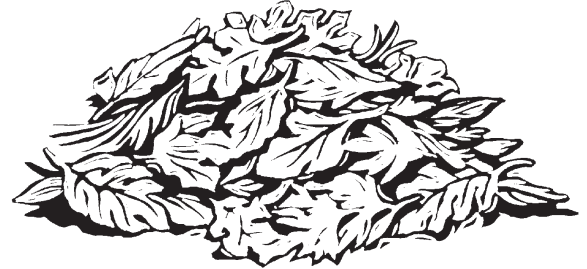
Recipe for Homemade Compost

Put your grass clippings to good use and conserve our diminishing landfill space.

Where To Start

Find a level, well-drained, and out-of-the-way spot in your yard. The area you'll need will vary depending on the size of your household and the size of your yard or garden.

Most compost piles are three to four feet in diameter and get to be about four or five feet high. Plan on three feet across and three feet high to start. A sunny place is better than a shady one, but composting works fine in the shade.

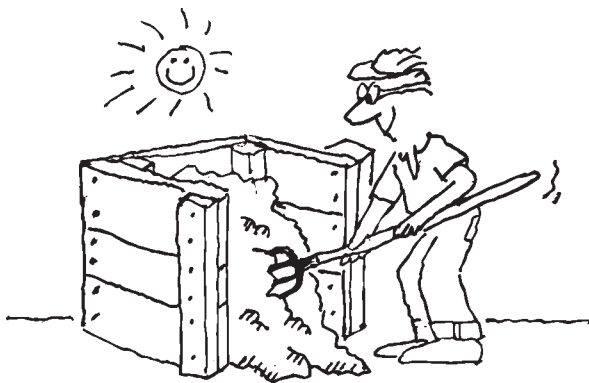


You might want to make some sort of boundary. A cheap and easy way to enclose the compost is to make a circle of chicken wire or wire fencing held in place with wood or metal stakes. The wire allows the needed oxygen to get to the compost so that the bacteria and fungi can work to turn waste into fertilizer and mulch.

Ingredients

Compost everything organic. If you have a supply of leaves with which to start, so much the better. Leaf mold is an excellent conditioner for clay or sandy soils because it retains water. Add: grass clippings, branches, tree and shrub trimmings, houseplant clippings, broccoli, leaves, apple cores, potato peelings, tomato stems, corn husks, grapefruit skins, coffee grounds, eggshells, grape stems, watermelon rinds, broom sweepings from your floors, house dust, cat and dog fur, and sawdust.

Almost anything organic will do, but avoid meat scraps and fats because they decompose slowly, and will attract animals. Pine needles and wood scraps also decompose slowly and may be too acidic for some soils.



Mix

Mix roughly 3-to-1 volumes of carbonaceous, or “brown”, material and nitrogenous, or “green”, material. In general, brown material feels more dry and woody, like dead leaves and dried grass. Green material is softer, mushier, or easily bruised, like fresh grass clippings, most kitchen waste, or livestock manure (*not* domesticated pet litter or droppings). These items, with the addition of water, oxygen, heat, and compostor organisms (microscopic and macroscopic), will degrade and become

compost. The nitrogen will assure quick composting, while the carbon will balance the mixture to prevent it from rotting and giving off that ammonia smell.

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Information taken from *Recipe for Homemade Compost* published by The Illuminating Company and Toledo Edison. Information for *A Standard Compost Recipe for Backyard Projects* courtesy of the Ohio State University Cooperative Extension Service. This brochure was compiled and printed by the Wood County Solid Waste District. For more information on composting, contact your local extension office or visit your local library!

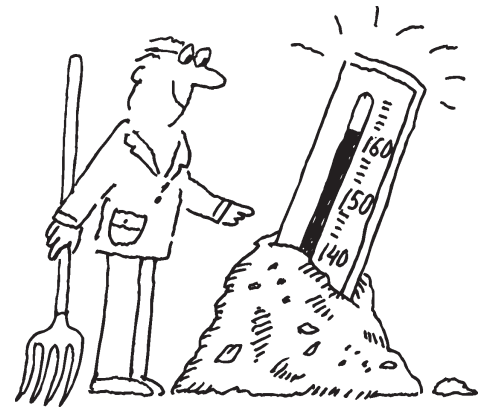
Let it Cook

Once you have enough material, the pile will begin to “cook” - that is, it will heat up to the temperature that will begin the composting process. The cooking will destroy weed seeds and disease organisms that may be present and will break down the organic material.

You will need to turn over the composting material every now and then to add oxygen and keep the less decomposed materials at the edges blended with the more decomposed materials in the center. If you turn the material over about every three days or so, it will be ready to use in about two months.

You can correct the mixture if it's not working. If your compost has no smell, it has too much carbon material. Just add more kitchen wastes or grass clippings to give it more nitrogen. If it's very dry, add enough water to dampen it.

If flies, fruit flies, wasps, or other insects are attracted to your compost, it's because you haven't covered the kitchen scraps with fruits or leaves. Animals will not be a problem as long as you avoid throwing meat scraps or bones into your compost.



Serving Suggestions: Dig Right In!

You can never have too much compost. It's an ideal soil conditioner and organic enricher. Use it to break down clay soils, improve water holding capacity of sandy soils, and add nutrients to your garden. Your plants will thank you! Other suggestions:

- Screen it and sprinkle it on your lawn. You can use compost to fill hollow spots or just to top dress.
- Mix it half and half with potting soil for houseplants.
- Compost serves as a superb mulch on garden plants. Mulch helps to conserve moisture, reduce soil erosion, control weeds, and extend the growing season.

A standard compost recipe for backyard projects:



1. Start with a 6” - 8” layer of high-carbon wastes such as dead leaves, woody brush, and plant stalks.

2. Follow with a 2” layer of high-nitrogen material, such as grass clippings, manure, or vegetable scraps from the kitchen (but avoid meats, fats, and oils!).



3. Add a 1” layer of soil or sod.



4. Repeat the entire layering process, watering as you go, but don't saturate the pile!

