

# Composting

Composting is the art of recycling resources that the earth can naturally digest and is an important part of the environment.



The benefits of composting vary in terms of who or what is reaping the rewards. Some major benefits of back yard composting include:

#### Conservation of Landfill Space

It can cost \$2,000,000 to open, operate and close a hectare of landfill space. Finding a new landfill is becoming extremely difficult and existing ones are filling up fast. Composting not only saves money today but also reduces the costs we pay to maintain landfills after they are closed.

#### Money Saved on Collecting Garbage

Many municipalities must transport their waste to distant disposal facilities. This is costly, so many areas have implemented a user pay system, where you must pay for the amount of garbage you produce. By composting, an individual can save money by reducing the number of bags purchased.

#### Composting Provides an Excellent Soil Conditioner

Produced free of charge, compost serves as an environmentally sound alternative to commercial fertilizers.

#### What is Compostable?

While not a complete list, here is a large compilation of acceptable and non acceptable products to compost. It is important to know exactly what you can and can not compost, so that your compost pile remains healthy and ready for use in the garden!

#### Will it smell?

A compost pile that is working well should not have an unpleasant odour. If it does, the materials may be too wet or compacted. Turn the pile to let it dry out, or add dry materials such as leaves.

#### ACCEPTABLE FOOD

- Apples
- Artichoke Leaves
- Asparagus Bottoms
- Banana Peels
- Beet Tops
- Assorted Berries
- Bread and Grain
- Broccoli Stalks
- Buckwheat Hulls
- Cabbage Stalks
- Carrot Tops
- Celery Tops
- Citrus Rinds
- Egg Shells
- Tea Leaves & Bags

#### ACCEPTABLE OTHER

- Algae (Pond Weeds)
- Apple Pomace
- Bird Cage Cleanings
- Bone & Blood Meal
- Cotton Rags
- Garden Wastes
- Granite Dust
- Leather Waste
- Leaf Mould
- Composted Manure
- Peanut Hulls
- Peat Moss
- Pine Needles
- Rope
- Wood Ash

#### NON ACCEPTABLE

- Butter
- Bones
- Cheese
- Chicken
- Fish Scraps
- Lard
- Mayonnaise
- Meat Scraps
- Milk
- Peanut Butter
- Salad Dressing
- Sour Cream
- Vegetable Oil
- Yogurt
- Diseased Plants

#### Troubleshooting Guide

Is your compost pile starting to persistently show symptoms and not appear healthy? There is a chance that there is one or more problems with the maintenance of the pile or its general size and composition. Please refer to this guide for tips on maintaining a healthy compost.

SYMPTOMS	PROBLEM	SOLUTION
The compost smells of ammonia.	Too much nitrogen in the pile.	Add brown leaves and mix them into the pile.
The compost smells like rotten eggs.	Not enough circulating air (anaerobic).	Aerate the pile. Turn for several days until dry.
The center of the pile is dry.	Not enough water.	Moisten materials while turning the pile.
The compost is damp and warm in the middle but nowhere else.	The pile is too small.	Collect material and mix old ingredients into a new pile.
The compost heap is attracting animals and other pests.	Scraps not properly covered by soil.	Fasten lid tightly. Do not add meat or fat and bury food wastes under soil.

#### What is Vermicomposting?

Vermicomposting is a unique and viable alternative for situations where normal composting techniques cannot be practiced. A special kind of earthworm is used to break down the organic materials. These animals are called red wigglers and are capable of eating their weight in organic matter each day. Along with the waste, the worms consume their bedding, then excrete castings.

These castings are an excellent natural plant food, that can be richer in certain materials than topsoil. Because composting using worms require less space than normal methods, it is ideal for offices, classrooms, and high density urban areas.

While an outdoor compost pile is still active during the winter, the decomposition is relatively slow. Most people are not generating yard waste after the snow falls. The only organic waste would be food and kitchen scraps. Vermicomposting allows a person to conveniently get rid of organic material without having to go outside.



#### How to Harvest Finished Compost

Some composting bins have an access door for the removal of finished compost. If you are using a container with more than one section, you can easily remove the finished compost from the section to which you are not adding fresh materials. If you are using what are sometimes called 'turning' or 'portable' units, simply move the whole container to a new location, fork the uncomposted materials from the top of the old pile into the empty unit, and remove the finished compost from the first pile.