

Compost Recipe

Building a compost pile is similar to making a pot of soup - collect a few ingredients and mix well. When gathering materials to compost, remember that a good mix of carbon ("brown stuff") and nitrogen ("green stuff") is needed. The ideal mix of carbon to nitrogen is 3:1.

Almost all natural, organic material will compost but not everything belongs in a compost pile. Here are some do's and don'ts:

DO compost:

- Fruit and vegetable scraps
- Egg shells
- Leaves and pine needles
- Green plants and flowers
- Coffee grounds
- Tea bags
- Grass clippings
- Manure from animals that do not eat meat
- Shredded newspaper
- Wood ash
- Straw and hay
- Wood chips and sawdust
- Cornstalks
- Brush and shrub trimmings

Always bury food waste in the middle of your compost pile to avoid odors and pests. Using a covered compost bin when composting food waste helps prevent pests. Be sure to wear gloves and wash your hands when working with compost.

DO NOT Compost:

- Oils, fats, and grease
- Bones
- Meat
- Salad dressings
- Diseased plants or weeds
- Inorganic material (i.e., plastic)
- Butter or dairy products
- Cat or dog manure

Purchasing a Compost Bin

Compost bins can be purchased at the following local stores. The District recommends contacting these stores to confirm availability before shopping for a bin.

Park + Vine

1202 Main Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202
513-721-7275
www.parkandvine.com

Anderson Township

Sells Earth Machine compost bins for \$35 each while supplies last.
Contact: Nancy Downs at 513-688-8400 ext. 1109 or
ndowns@andersontownship.org

Worm's Way

1360 Donaldson Highway, Erlanger, KY 41018
859-525-9676
www.wormsway.com

Integra Contracting, Renewable Resources Division

Builds custom compost bins.
Robert Waddell, 513-379-9069
integracontractingrrd@fuse.net

Backyard Compost Bin Sale

Each year, the District sponsors its own compost bin sale, featuring name-brand compost bins at more than half off the retail price. To be placed on the mailing list for future Backyard Compost Bin sales, call 946-7755.

Contact Us!

Have questions regarding composting? Contact the Hamilton County Compost and Yardwaste Hotline at

513-946-7755

or visit

HamiltonCountyRecycles.org



Backyard Composting: a beginner's guide



Composting is a great way to recycle all types of yardwaste and provides a free source of compost—a nutrient-rich soil amendment great for gardening. A compost pile naturally breaks down food and yardwaste into compost right in your backyard, saving you the time and energy of bagging, storing, and then hauling yardwaste to the curb or drop-off center.

Composting requires only a minimal amount of maintenance to produce a useable product. Compost loosens soil for better root penetration, improves soil capacity to hold water, and adds essential nutrients to soil.

In this guide, you can find information about creating and maintaining a compost pile, suggestions for building your own compost bin and more!

Have composting questions? The District is here to help!

Hamilton County Compost and Yardwaste Hotline:

513-946-7755

HamiltonCountyRecycles.org

Composting Basics

Composting can be as simple as throwing organic material into a pile and letting nature do the work.

Pick a Good Spot

Choose a composting site with plenty of room that is comfortable to work around and won't interfere with your family's lawn and garden activities.

Your compost pile should stay moist, so exposure to rain is fine, but make sure the area has good drainage. Also be sure that the site is a safe distance away from waterways such as creekbeds, streams or rivers. Your compost pile should not be located against wooden buildings or trees; wood in direct contact with compost will decay.

Finding the Right Mix

For basic compost, a mix of carbon and nitrogen sources is needed to get started.

- Good sources of carbon are brown materials, such as leaves, straw, sawdust or paper.
- Nitrogen typically comes from green material like grass clippings and food waste.

General Guidelines for Backyard Composting

Space - A minimum of 3 ft. x 3 ft. x 3 ft. of space is best to maintain the proper volume needed for an active compost pile.

Bin - The bin provides an attractive, controlled environment to contain the material.

Oxygen - Turning the pile provides oxygen to the bacteria and other microorganisms doing the work.

Water - The pile should be moist like a wrung sponge. With rain, the pile may stay moist without help. During dry spells, use water to keep the pile damp.

Material or Food - The microorganisms working to break down the pile need two types of food, carbon and nitrogen. To find out what should be composted, read the included compost recipe.



A Hot Pile Means It's Working

A properly made compost pile will reach a temperature of 90 – 140° F in four to five days. You can purchase a temperature probe or soil thermometer at a garden or hardware store or through the Internet. You will notice the pile settling - a good sign that it is working!

Turning the Pile

Turning the pile once every month or two is simple and requires little effort, but it will take you a year or longer to produce compost.

Turning more frequently will allow the compost pile to decompose very quickly. Properly managed piles can break down organic material into compost in three months or less.

Compost is ready to use when it is dark brown, crumbly, and earthy-smelling. For best results, let it stabilize a few extra days and sift it through a one-half inch screen (optional). When handling compost, be sure to use gloves and wash your hands when finished.

Uses of Compost

Compost can be used as both a mulch and a soil amendment.

Benefits of mulching with compost:

- Controls weeds
- Maintains soil temperatures
- Reduces soil erosion on slopes
- Beautifies planting area
- Adds micronutrients
- Reduces moisture loss

Benefits of incorporating compost into the soil:

- Loosens heavy clay soils
- Aerates the rooting area
- Improves soil's capacity to hold water and nutrients
- Attracts earthworms and other microbes that benefit gardens
- Provides valuable nutrients for plant growth

Building A Compost Bin

A bin is not required to compost. However, bins do look more attractive in the yard and speed up the decomposition process by trapping in moisture and heat.

Compost bins are also available for purchase. See the back panel of this brochure for a list of local retailers that sell compost bins.

Wire Bin

A sheet of 14-gauge mesh wire is needed to construct this bin.

To determine the length of wire needed, multiply the diameter of the bin desired by 3.2. The ideal diameter is three to five feet. Fasten the ends of the woven wire with four small chain snaps or plastic zip ties to make a circle.



Snow Fence Bin

To build this bin, you need the appropriate length of prefabricated fencing. Fasten 2 x 4s as corner posts to form a square.

Block or Brick Bin

Compost bins can be made with bricks, cement, or blocks. Lay the blocks without mortar, leaving spaces between each block to allow aeration. Stack them to form three sides of a square container.

Wooden Bins

A wooden bin can be constructed with a removable front or side so materials can be easily turned. Old wood pallets can also be used for construction.



See back panel for a list of compost bin retailers.