

Troubleshooting

Symptoms	Problems	Solutions
Bad odor	Not enough air circulation, or too much green material	Mix the pile, or add in more brown material
Composts too slowly	Not enough water	Moisten and mix the pile
Pile is damp and warm only in center	Pile is too small	Collect more material and mix it into the pile
Pile is damp and sweet-smelling but no heat	Not enough green material	Mix in more green material like fresh grass
Attracts animals	Inappropriate materials, or food scraps too close to surface of pile	Avoid meat, oils, bones, dairy, etc. Bury food scraps 8-10 inches into the center of the pile

Examples of green and brown materials are listed in the Compost Recipe section.

Other Resources

Go to dnr.wi.gov and search “compost” or scan the QR code to access additional information.



Department Of Natural Resources
Bureau of Waste and Materials Management
P.O. Box 7921 Madison, WI 53707

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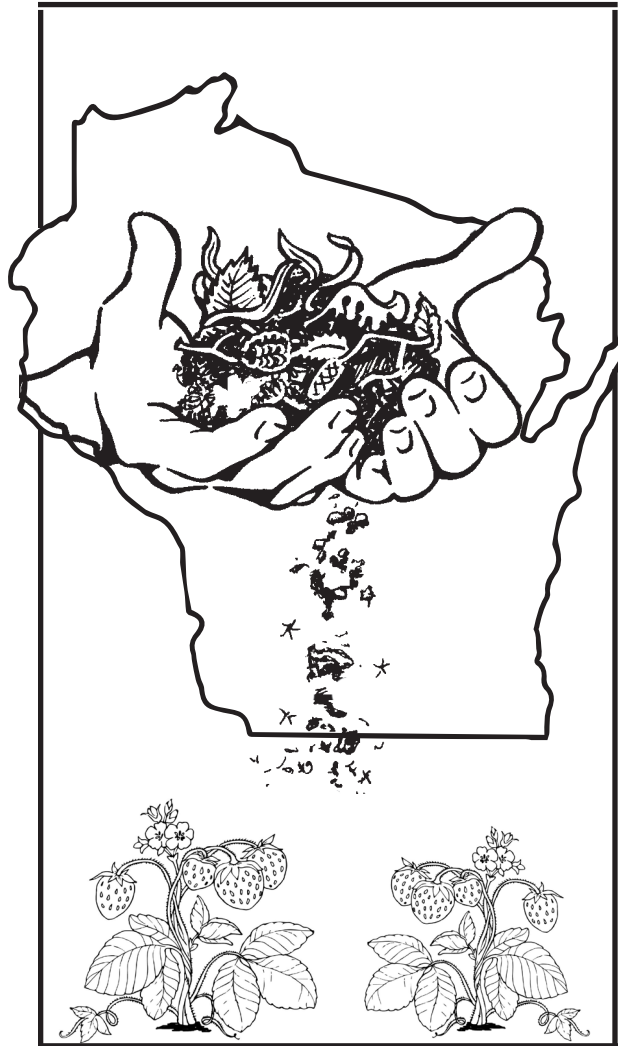


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HOME COMPOSTING

Reap A Heap Of Benefits



Wisconsin Department
of Natural Resources
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Why Compost?

Since January 1993, state law bans yard waste—leaves, grass clippings, garden debris, and twigs, brush and branches smaller than six inches in diameter—from landfills and most incinerators. This law does not apply to stumps, roots or shrubs with intact root balls, or incinerators which burn waste to recover energy.

Food waste, including previously edible food and food scraps, is the top waste headed to Wisconsin landfills. Once there, the food waste fuels the production of methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

Composting breaks down your yard and food waste in an environmentally-friendly way and produces a valuable soil conditioner.

Composting:

- Saves you money by reducing the need for commercial soil amendments and waste disposal costs.
- Helps your garden and lawn by improving the fertility and health of your soil.
- Saves water by helping the soil hold moisture and reducing water runoff.
- Saves valuable space in our landfills, and reduces landfill gas emissions.

A Burning Issue

Backyard burning pollutes the air, creates a fire hazard and is a nuisance to neighbors. State air, waste and fire control rules restrict backyard burning, and many communities prohibit it entirely. For a cleaner, safer alternative to burning your yard waste, try composting!

What Can You Compost?

Do Compost

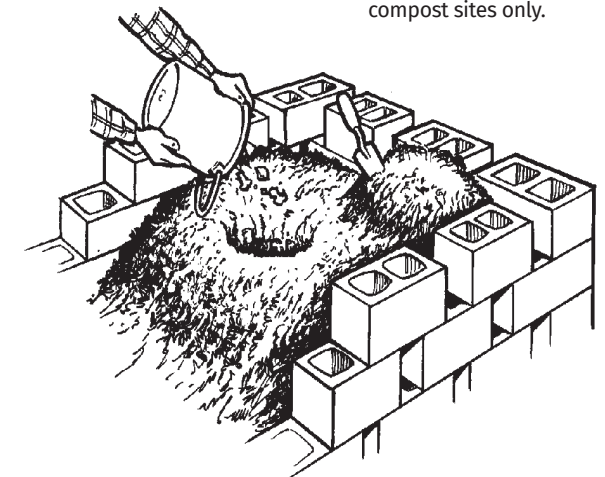
- grass clippings
- leaves
- straw
- weeds & garden debris
- small brush, twigs
- vegetable and fruit peels, rinds, cores and trimmings
- pumpkins & gourds
- sawdust & wood chips
- eggshells
- coffee grounds, tea leaves & paper filters
- shredded paper
- paper egg cartons

Do NOT Compost

- meat, bones, fat
- dairy products
- oils
- weeds gone to seed
- invasive weeds and plants
- whole branches, logs
- pet or human waste/litter
- pet food
- charcoal briquette ash
- sawdust or ash from treated wood
- products labeled “biodegradable”
- Certified-compostable plates, bowls and containers*

If composting through a collection service, ask for a full list of what they accept.

* These materials are certified for large scale compost sites only.



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 and form it into a pile, the only time you'll spend is for occasional maintenance. Then sit back and let nature do the rest!

Composting Equipment

Tools

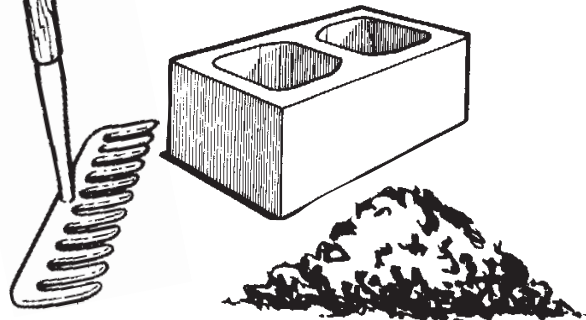
All you need are some basic gardening tools, like a pitchfork, a rake, and a shovel.

Materials

Compost bins can be built with inexpensive materials like fencing, woven wire, or used cinder blocks and lumber.

Soil

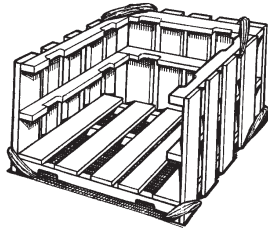
You don't need store-bought "soil activators" or potting soil to compost. One inch of soil from your yard or garden has all the ingredients needed to start the composting process.



Composting Bins

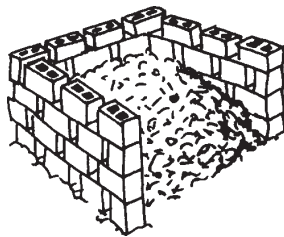
Used Pallet Bin

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 and fasten together 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 and measure it. (For a 4'x4'x4' compost pile, purchase 16 feet 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.

Watch Out For Jumping Worms!

Keep an eye out for jumping worms, an invasive species, which produce a grainy soil. Prevention is the best approach. If your property already has jumping worms, there are steps you can take to manage them. Go to dnr.wi.gov and search "jumping worms" to learn more.

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 and use them to start a new batch. Compost improves soil structure, holds in moisture and plant nutrients, and promotes strong, healthy root systems for plant growth. Here are the most common ways to use compost:

Mix It Into Soil

- Mix 2 inches of compost into the top 6–8 inches of lawn soil before seeding for grass.
- Mix 2 inches of compost into the top 6–8 inches of garden soil before planting.
- Spread a 2 or 3 inch 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, and trees to discourage weeds, help soil retain moisture, and protect roots from alternate freezing and thawing during winter months.



Composting Recipes

Shopping List:

- Nitrogen-rich "greens" include grass clippings, green yard trimmings, weeds and fruit and vegetable scraps.
- Carbon-rich "browns" include leaves, small brush and twigs (1/2" diameter or less), woody plant prunings, sawdust, shredded paper.

Slow Compost

Ingredients:

Mix one volume of green materials with two or three volumes of brown materials, water as needed.

Directions:

- In a heap or bin, layer your greens as they accumulate. For faster composting, chop them up first with a hoe or lawn mower.
- Water so compost is kept as moist as a wrung-out sponge, and turn periodically.
- In 6 to 18 months, the material at the bottom and center of the pile will be dark, crumbly compost. Sift, and use the uncomposted material to start a new batch.

Fast Compost

Ingredients:

Green and brown materials, water as needed.

Directions:

- Mix one part green materials with two parts brown to form a pile (an average size is 4'x4'x4'). For fast composting, chop them up first with a hoe or lawn mower.
- Mix in one inch of soil.
- Keep the pile as moist as a wrung-out sponge.
- Turn the pile every week to let air in.
- Finished compost will take between twelve weeks and one year, depending on how often you turn it and how well you maintain the moisture of the pile.