

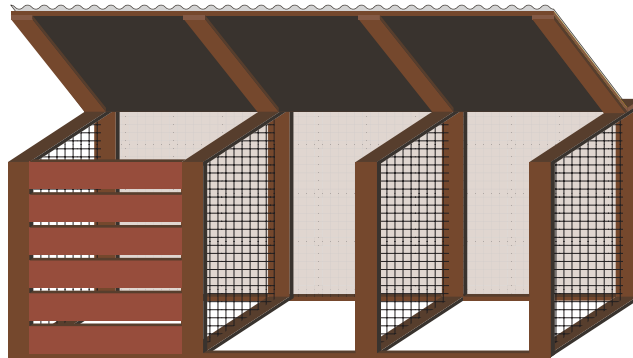
Starting a Compost Pile

The Basics.

Compost is, simply, decomposing organic matter, and while it may seem like a complex or magical experiment, composting is a natural and extremely easy process. Starting a compost pile is a great way to recycle kitchen and yard waste while producing a nutritious super food for your garden.

Building a structure.

A compost pile can be as simple or as extravagant as you choose. You can simply pile up the compost in a corner of the yard. However, many gardeners prefer to use some kind of enclosure. This can be due to personal preference and/or local restrictions and guidelines. Chicken wire, wood timbers or blocks can be used to construct an enclosure, but keep in mind how you will get the finished compost out. You might want to leave one side open.



3-Bin Compost System

What to compost.

The list of things that can't be composted is much smaller than the things that can. Most yard, garden and kitchen waste are usable.

Making compost is as simple as combining the correct ratio of carbon (brown) and nitrogen (green). Start with a layer of twigs and sticks and then start alternating layers, if your pile starts to get slimy, you have too much nitrogen (green), add more brown (carbon). If pile stops breaking down, add more greens (nitrogen).

Browns = High Carbon

- Ashes, wood, sawdust
- Bark and leaves
- Cardboard, shredded
- Corn and vegetable stalks
- Fruit wastes
- Newspapers, shredded
- Peanut shells
- Pine needles
- Stems and twigs, shredded
- Straw

Greens = High Nitrogen

- Alfalfa
 - Algae
 - Clover
 - Coffee grounds
 - Food waste, vegetable scraps
 - Garden waste, grass clippings
 - Hay
 - Hops, used
 - Manures
 - Seaweed
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The Basics.

Do not compost.

Meats, fats, grease, oils, bones, diseased plants (never compost roses) **colored paper, ashes** (coal or charcoal), **cat or dog waste, toxic materials or inorganic materials.**

For meats, fats, bones and other smellier food waste, consider a Bokashi Composting System.

Avoid **weeds** that have gone to seed, as seeds may survive all but the hottest compost pile.

Tips to speed up the process.

Turn your pile. Turning your pile increases the oxygen level which makes the bacteria happy. Happy bacteria eat more and help your compost break down faster.

Add water. The compost pile should be moist (not wet) to help speed the process. This is why your pile should be placed within range of a hose.

Add an activator. A compost activator helps to turn on your pile and really get it working at its full potential. You can purchase a ready-made activator or use alfalfa meal, manure, bone meal, blood meal or even dry dog food.

Start more than one pile. It is hard for your pile to efficiently break down when you are constantly adding things to it. Once decomposition has started try not to add anything unless you notice a brown/ green ratio problem.

Bokashi composting.

There are many ways to compost. One you can do “smell-free” and from within your house is the Bokashi system. Bokashi is a Japanese word meaning “fermented organic matter.” Bokashi composting requires only about 10 days to convert organic materials into useable material, and the nutrient value of the material is among the highest of any method of composting.

The Bokashi method can take not only your fruit and vegetable peelings and scraps, but can also take cheeses, meats, bones, fat, and other items that are not recommended for a regular compost pile.

There are just a few requirements for the set up, including a bucket with spigot, a strainer, and a specially inoculated bran. A byproduct of this composting process is the Bokashi Tea, which is a great for your houseplants, as it is packed with nutrients!

Note that the completed product still looks like the original foodscraps. Learn more at: compostmagazine.com/bokashi-bin-guide

