

# Composting Tips

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- 1.** Old shipping pallets make great compost bins. Begin with one flat on the ground. Drive two metal support poles into the ground on each side. Slide other pallets over each support and your bin is complete.
- 2.** Stinky compost pile? This is probably due to an overabundance of anaerobic microbes, enthusiastically breaking down your compost, but creating quite a funk the process. To cut down on the overabundance, fluff the pile regularly, creating air spaces and limiting the anaerobic microbes while stimulating the less smelly aerobic microbes.
- 3.** To keep your compost pile cooking during the winter, keep it in a black bin in the direct sunlight, or insulate with hay bales.
- 4.** For a simple compost pile, simply rake the contents into a pile and let it sit for several months.
- 5.** Place your compost pile or bin in full sun for faster composting.
- 6.** Finished compost usually ends up at less than half the volume of the materials you started with, but it is usually quite a bit denser.
- 7.** Introduce the microbes necessary to begin "cooking" your compost by adding some aged manure or good topsoil to the raw materials.
- 8.** Newspaper or plain white computer paper is an excellent addition to your compost pile - just remember to shred it first to encourage for faster composting.
- 9.** Grass clippings are a great addition to your compost pile, but be sure to mix them thoroughly with dried leaves, straw, hay, sawdust, or shredded newspaper to balance the mixture. A pile consisting of only grass will compact, mat, start to smell, and won't compost quickly.
- 10.** Anything that has been alive is great for compost bins. Think of leaves, vegetable wastes, and grass clippings.
- 11.** Use a compost turner for faster results.
- 12.** Finished compost should look and smell like rich, dark soil.

- 13.** Nutrients leach quickly out of a cooking compost pile in rainy climates. Protect your pile from the elements with a tarp or small roof to keep the nutrients in the pile. Too much water in the pile will also slow the composting process.
- 14.** Do not compost fat, cat and dog droppings, or dairy or meat products.
- 15.** Avoid composting plants that have been treated with chemicals including lawn clippings, human waste, bones, and weeds with seed.
- 16.** When planning a compost pile, remember it needs to be no smaller than 3' x 3' x 3'. This is the perfect size, retaining heat while still allowing air flow. It is also manageable to turn regularly.
- 17.** Algae, seaweed, and lake weed make excellent additions to your compost pile. Be sure to rinse off any salt water before adding.
- 18.** Keep your compost pile lightly moist, like a wrung-out sponge. When constructing the pile, be sure to wet each layer as you add it. Keep the surface damp, especially during dry periods.
- 19.** Add ashes from a wood-burning stove to your compost pile sparingly, as they are alkaline and affect the pH. They are most useful when you have also added acidic materials such as pine needles or oak leaves.
- 20.** Help start a new compost pile with aged manure, alfalfa meal, cottonseed meal, blood meal, or compost starter. They are rich in nitrogen and help jump-start the microbes responsible for breaking down organic matter into compost.
- 21.** Grass clippings add necessary nitrogen to a compost pile, but be sure to mix with the "brown" materials that add carbon. Both are required for a balanced, quickly decomposing pile.
- 22.** Don't allow your kitchen vegetable waste to go in the trash in the winter - try an indoor composter.
- 23.** Microorganisms breaking down your compost need a balance of carbon and nitrogen. Carbon comes from brown materials such as dead leaves, dry hay, wood chips and shredded newspaper. Nitrogen comes from green materials such as grass clippings, food scraps and manure. An equal ratio of each is best and be sure to mix well.
- 24.** Worms love to decompose coffee grounds!

- 25.** When possible, cover any kitchen scraps you add to the compost pile immediately with leaves or grass clippings to cover up any smells that might attract critters.
- 26.** When is your compost finished? It should look, feel and smell like rich soil. You should not be able to recognize any of the items you put in there.
- 27.** Straw is excellent source of carbon material for your compost pile when leaves are not available. It may contain weed seeds, however, so be sure the pile heated enough to kill the seeds.
- 28.** Compost decomposes fastest between 120 and 160 F. Decomposition occurs at a lower temperature, but it takes longer.
- 29.** Compost piles can either be layered - thin layers of alternating greens and browns, or they can all be thrown in together and mixed well. Either way works well.
- 30.** Do not use pet waste in compost. It can spread disease.