



## COMPOST YOUR YARD WASTE

Composting is an excellent alternative to the burning leaves and other yard waste.

### *What is compost?*

Compost is a dark, crumbly, earthy smelling mixture that consists mostly of decayed organic matter. It is a simple, natural process – nature’s way of recycling nutrients and returning them to the soil.

### *What can I compost?*

Yard wastes, such as fallen leaves, grass clippings, weeds and the remains of garden plants.

### *How do I make a compost pile?*

It’s easy! To build a simple compost bin, do any of the following:

- Use 10 feet of small-mesh wire fencing or snow fencing shaped into a square, circle or a rectangle.
- Buy a bin at a local hardware or garden center.
- Don’t use a bin at all, but have a sheltered, free-standing pile.

### *To start your compost pile:*

Compost piles work best if they have the right balance of materials.

Ingredients should be:

- **Browns (carbon source)** – Leaves, straw, wood chips, sawdust.
- **Greens (nitrogen source)** – Fruit and vegetables wastes, coffee grounds, grass clippings and/or manure. Kitchen scraps should be added to the center of the waste layers where heat will be the greatest.

That’s all there is to it! Just Remember:

**Turn the pile** – The more you turn it the faster it works.

**Water the pile** – A compost pile should be kept damp – but not soggy – especially during dry spells.

**Be Patient!** It will take six months to a year before the compost is ready for use.

### *Composting Do’s and Don’ts*

**DO** add lime, small amounts of wood ashes or crushed eggshells to the compost pile to neutralize acids which may form and cause an odor problem.

**DO** mix grass clippings with other wastes to loosen them up. They have a tendency to compact.

**DO** keep the compost pile damp, especially during dry spells.

**DON'T** use unfinished compost. It will rob your plants of nitrogen instead of acting as a fertilizer.

**DON'T** compost weeds that are heavily laden with seeds. Some seeds will not be killed during the heating process.

**DON'T** add meat, fish, bones or fatty food scraps to the compost mixture. They will attract animals, and do not decompose readily.

**DON'T** add diseased vegetable plants to the pile if the compost will be used on a vegetable garden. The disease organisms may reappear the following year.

### *Compost Uses:*

- Soil additive – improves moisture retention, improves texture. Use around garden beds, trees, shrubs or sprinkle it on your lawn.
- House plants – use a half to a third of the container volume of compost along with soil.

### *Why should I make compost?*

- Composting is easy.
- It is a great way to recycle your organic yard and kitchen waste.
- It saves money on peat moss and fertilizer.
- It improves the soil.
- It is the best alternative; it prevents land filling or burning the compost ingredients.

Source: Prince William County, Virginia