

Composting: How to Do It

Last week, we covered the basics of what composting is and why it is beneficial. This week, we will get into more details about how to compost so that you can determine if this is something you can do to help reduce the waste you're sending to the landfill and to create your very own nutrient-rich soil.

Composting requires three ingredients: browns, greens, and water. (If you don't remember what browns and greens are, refer back to [last week's post](#).) Aim to have a 2:1 brown to green mixture, but a 1:1 ratio will also work. Before you can start composting at home, you need to decide whether an indoor or an outdoor compost pile will work best for you. If you have limited yard space, an indoor vermicompost pile might work best for you. However, if you have the yard space, an outdoor compost pile saves you space indoors and can be much larger than a vermicompost pile.

Composting Outdoors. Select a dry, shady spot near a water source. Build a compost pile by placing the materials in a compost bin or an open pile. Bins should be roughly 1 yard³ in size. Larger pieces of browns and greens should be shredded and torn so they'll break down faster and more completely. Bins can be simple, elaborate, homemade, or store-bought. Building a bin out of three wooden pallets is a simple, inexpensive way to build your own bin. Search the internet for tips on how to build your own compost bin.

Once you have a pile constructed, add your browns and greens. You'll want to keep the pile as moist as a wrung-out sponge. If your pile becomes too moist, it will rot and become odorous. If your pile gets too dry, it won't compost very quickly. Maintain air flow in the compost pile by turning it or mixing it with a pitchfork occasionally. Turning the pile with a pitchfork also helps breakdown the materials into nutrient-rich compost faster because you move the items on the edges of the pile to the center - the hottest part of the pile.

Composting Indoors. A worm composting bin (a vermicomposter) is a great option for indoor composting. The worms aid in the composting process and keeping the worms indoors protects them from extreme temperatures. Worm composting bins can be homemade or store-bought. The Environmental Protection Agency details how to set up your own vermicomposter, or you can do your own internet search on how to build your own vermicompost bin. (See this [link](#)!)

Usable compost can be achieved in 2 to 18 months, depending on moisture, additions, turning, etc. The finished product is a valuable soil component that can be used in gardens and landscape beds and can be added to potting soil. Vermicomposting will produce "compost tea" as well (a nutrient-rich liquid) which can be given to outdoor plants or watered down and given to indoor plants. Now that you have these nutrient-rich soil components, close the loop and use them to grow your own fruits, veggies, and flowers!