

C Lasagna Layering for easy COMPOST

Lasagna Layering simply means building your compost pile with distinct thin layers of fresh nitrogen-rich materials and thicker layers of dry carbon-rich materials. A well-layered bin also supplies the necessary water and air your compost needs while minimizing maintenance, deterring pests, and balancing your pile for more effective composting with little odor.



Are you a **lazy** composter?

Lasagna layering lets you set it up and forget it with **no turning necessary** whether you compost a little or a lot! Find finished compost at the bottom in about a year.

Are you a **super** composter?

Lasagna layering **balances biological & chemical factors** for optimal decomposition and is a great way to collect material before adding to a tumbler. Regularly turning will result in finished compost, faster.



BROWNS

Browns are carbon-rich materials such as straw, dried leaves, wood chips, sawdust, even torn up paper.

They are bulky and allow for air circulation in your bin.

The brown layers help balance the moisture in a pile, since they are usually much drier than the food scraps. The porosity they provide allows air to penetrate and excess moisture to escape.

Finally, the browns serve as a visual and physical barrier to pests by filtering food smells and putting the food scraps out of reach of insects.

STICKS

Start your lasagna layering with an initial layer of sticks, stalks, or small branches about as thick as celery.



GREENS

Food scraps and fresh or dense garden trimmings* are nitrogen-rich materials, referred to as “greens.” They provide necessary moisture to your compost bin.

Acceptable “greens” include food scraps, leftovers, grass trimmings, manures from herbivores, hair, and eggshells.

Never include meat, oils, dairy products, or bones. They increase unpleasant odors & attract vermin.

Too many greens can cause an ammonia smell.

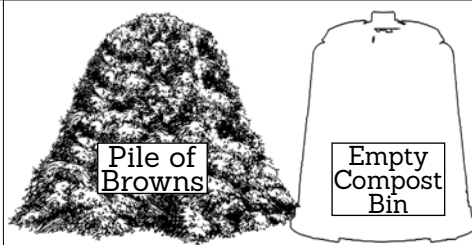
*Most weeds or garden trimmings can be layered without needing to be covered with browns, except for really dense fresh material like lawn clippings.

Loosely criss-cross 8-10” of stalky material to establish gaps for air to flow in and for excess moisture to flow out.

WHAT TO DO

WHY IT WORKS

Set up your compost area ideally with room for your bin AND an equally-sized space for a pile of browns (works well to keep browns dry in a covered trashcan). You'll need the room to harvest and re-establish your bin later.



You'll need to add browns **every** time you add greens, so keep a supply in arms' reach of your bin at all times. To maximize your garden's nutrients, site your bin and browns where you will want to plant next season. Not only will that area be nutrient-rich, it means you won't have to transport your finished compost as far.

Start by criss-crossing long, coarse sticks or stalky material into a pile that will not compress as the bin fills. 8-10" deep.



This layer provides large gaps for air, just like in a campfire, in which the open structure at the bottom pulls in oxygen to feed your fire. With compost, the oxygen feeds aerobic (oxygen-loving) decomposing organisms, keeping the pile from becoming anaerobic (aka smelly) and allowing for drainage.

Then add a 2-3" layer of browns in a shallow bowl shape (higher on the sides). Luckily you have your browns set up, inches away. Having browns ready to go makes proper layering easy!



This base layer will keep your greens from falling in between your sticks and make sure all greens are layered between browns, which balances the moisture of your pile.

Every time you add greens to your bin add them into the bowl, about 4" from all edges. Spread them out so they are no more than 1-2" thick. Then cover them with browns until no food shows.



Thin layers of greens towards the center of your bin covered with a layer of browns keeps your bin in the ideal balance of 1 part nitrogen-rich materials to 3 parts carbon-rich materials (by volume). It also ensures adequate air and moisture. Keeping fresh scraps away from the edges will prevent nuisance animals from easily finding them.

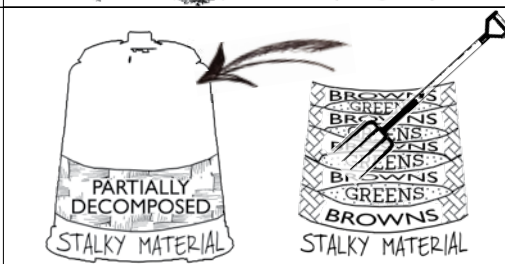
Months later, when your bin is full and your pile of browns is depleted, remove the walls of your bin and set them back up in the available space next to where the bin was.



It can take an average of 6-12 months to fill a household compost bin depending on your habits. As the material decomposes it loses volume, making room for more. The most popular bins in our area (wire bin, pallets wired together, and the Earth Machine*) are designed to be easy to empty and to reassemble.

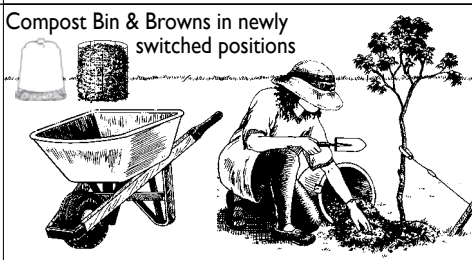
*available at cost from TC Recycling & Materials Management

Add coarse sticks just as before. Shovel or pitchfork material from the top of your pile into the newly set up bin. Keep recognizable food scraps away from the sides. Keep going until you reach finished-looking compost.



The material that has been in your pile the for the longest time will have had the most time to decompose into compost that is ready to be used in your garden. Starting your new compost pile with your unfinished compost helps to mix ingredients, bringing the materials that were on the outside edges into the middle where they will break down faster.

When you reach finished compost, use this nutrient rich amendment in your garden or for your houseplants. You can sift it to get finer compost or use it as is. Set up your leaves where your bin was, and start the cycle again.



Compost adds nutrients and beneficial soil life to your soil. Sifted compost is great for potting mixes, or anywhere you'd like finer material. Coarser compost can be dug into beds or used as mulch. Compost that you harvest and add to your garden in the fall will continue to decompose over the winter and be ready for spring.