What is Compost?

In nature, compostable organic matter will decompose without our help, with the resulting matter going back into the environment.

Composting is the managed decomposition of organic matter:

A. We build a healthy place for decomposing organisms to do their job.

B. We feed the bin with nutritious food scraps and garden trimmings (greens & browns).

C. We make sure it has enough water and air.

D. We harvest the results to enrich our soil.

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Master Composters of Tompkins County
Why Compost

Same apple, very different journey.

It Saves Money
Compost is a high-quality soil amendment that can be used instead of expensive bagged products.

It's Good for the Earth
Adding compost enriches the soil, helping gardens grow without chemicals.

It Saves Money
About 30% of all our waste is compostable. Your family can save on the cost of trash tags or disposal fees.

It Reduces Carbon Footprint
Less fuel and electricity is used to transport and process waste.

It Reduces Landfill Use
Not only does it alleviate pressure on our infrastructure, it reduces outgassing into the air and leachate seeping into groundwater.

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Where To Compost

Composting begins in your kitchen.

1. Pick a container that’s the right size to hold the amount of food scraps you produce.
2. Use a tight-fitting lid to discourage fruit flies and odors.
3. Line with newspaper to absorb moisture and make cleanup easy.

Then, it moves into a compost bin or pile of your choice.

- Set-up effort:
- Maintenance:
- Cost:
- Size:
- Property:
- Sun or Shade:
-好坏 (good or bad) the best place for a compost bin is where you will remember to use it best.
- My Perfect Compost Bin

Whether you place your bin in the sun or in the shade, your back door or on the back door, don’t forget to store it somewhere you can remember to use it best.

Outdoor, indoors, 3 feet away from your door, you can’t forget to use it best.

DON’T FORGET

Loves

Your Compost

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Make your own compost at home!

Lives

Your Compost

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What To Compost

Your home compost bin is a strict vegetarian. Only include plant or plant-based materials. (except eggshells & hair or fur)

You Can Compost:
- Fruits & Veggies
- Bread & Pasta
- Tea & Tea Bags
- Coffee Grounds & Filters
- Newspaper, shredded
- Eggshells, crumbled
- Napkins & Paper Towels
- Uncoated Paper Plates
- Yard Waste
- Manures*
- Dryer Lint
- Untreated Sawdust
- Hair
- Natural Fibers
  *Include Manure & Bedding from any herbivore (cows, horses, hamsters, rabbits, etc)

Don’t Compost:
- Meats*
- Eggs or Dairy*
- Plastic
- Cooking Oil or Oily Sauces*
- Plastic-coated Paper
- Wax-Coated Paper*
- Metal
- Rocks
- Compostable Utensils*
- Invasive Weeds
- Weed Seeds
- Diseased Plants
- Diapers
- Dog or Cat Waste
* A commercial compost facility can handle these since they compost at very high temps.

Size Size Size Size Size Size Size Size Matters!
Your compost bin breaks down food the same way your body does: The bigger the particle the longer it will take to digest. If your item is larger than a whole apple, chop it up.

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How To Compost

A compost bin is actually a habitat for compost “D.O.ers” (Decomposing Organisms). Layer the right amounts of air, water, and food, and they will produce rich compost.

**Water**  **Oxygen**  **Nitrogen**  **Carbon**

Balance these inputs for successful compost!

Too much water will make your compost slimy and smelly.
Too much air will dry the bin and bring composting to a halt.
Too much nitrogen (greens) will make your compost smelly.
Too much carbon (browns) will slow composting.

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**How to Lasagna Layer**

1. **Start With Sticks**
   8” of criss-crossed sticks ensures airflow, just like when building a fire.

2. **Add Browns**
   Add a layer of leaves or other carbon materials - higher on the sides, lower in the middle (bowl-shaped).

3. **Add Greens**
   Add grass clippings, food scraps or other nitrogen materials in a thin layer in the “bowl.”

4. **Cover the Greens**
   Add a 1-2” layer of browns - enough to completely cover the greens.

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Using Compost

Harvest time!
Is it ready? If you’ve been turning your compost, check it after 6-8 months. If not, wait a year. Use your senses to find out:

- It should look uniformly dark with no recognizable food. (pits & egg shells may persist)
- It should smell like rich soil, nothing more.
- It should feel crumbly and moist, as if you mixed damp soil and mulch.

For most bins (except for the tumbler types), the stuff at the bottom will be finished months before the stuff at the top.

Somewhere around the halfway point you’ll start seeing finished compost

Step 1: Lift or disassemble your bin, reassemble it right next your pile, this will be its new home.

Step 2: Place sticks at the bottom of your empty bin for aeration.

Step 3: Shovel the stuff at the top of your pile into your empty bin. Keep any uncomposted food to the middle of the pile. Keep going until you reach finished compost.

Step 4: Use the finished compost:

- As mulch around trees and plants
- Dug in a few inches from the base of plants
- Sifted through a screen and used in seed starting or potting mixes

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