

Quick-Start Guide to COMPOST



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.



Why COMPOST

Same apple, **very** different journey.



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 Saves Money

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

It Reduces Carbon Footprint

Less fuel and electricity is used to transport and process waste.



It's Good for the Earth

Adding compost enriches the soil, helping gardens grow without chemicals.

It Reduces Landfill Use

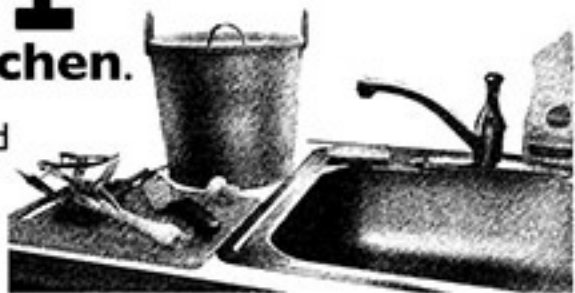
Not only does it alleviate pressure on our infrastructure, it reduces outgassing into the air and leachate seeping into groundwater.



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.

Indoors



Outdoors



Amount of Scraps
Set-up Property Size
effort Cost Speed
Maintenance

My Perfect
Compost Bin

Whether you place your bin in the sun or in the shade,* by your back door or on the back forty, the **best place** for a compost bin is where you **will remember to use it** best.

*Sun versus shade placement only impacts moisture level. Sunny bins may dry out, shady bins may get too wet.

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Tompkins County



LOVE
YOUR
COMPOST!

Master Composters of Tompkins County

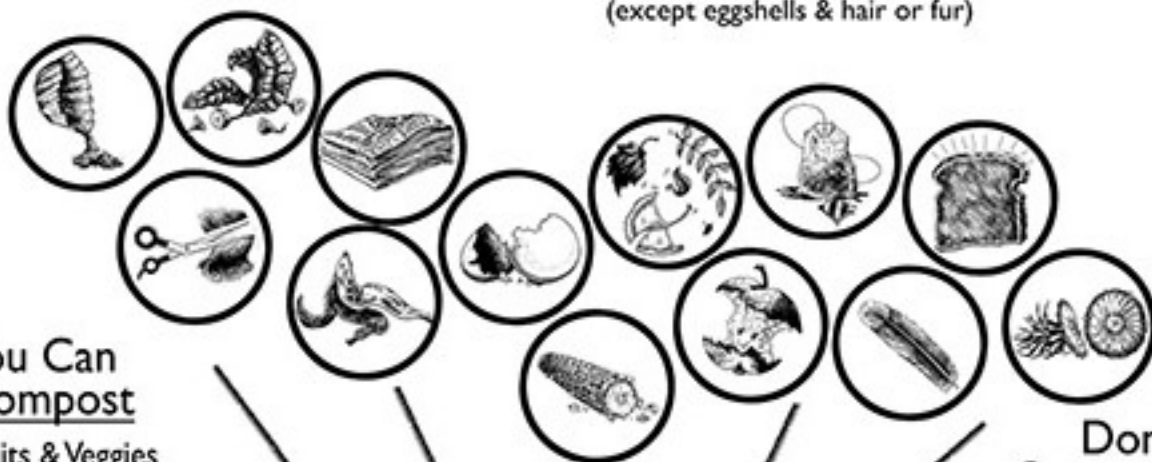


What To COMPOST

Your **home** compost bin is a **strict vegetarian**.

Only include plant or plant-based materials.

(except eggshells & hair or fur)



You Can Compost

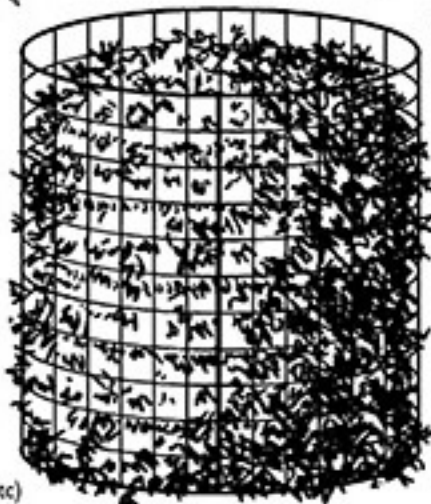
Fruits & Veggies
Bread & Pasta
Tea & Tea Bags
Coffee Grounds & Filters
Newspaper, shredded
Eggshells, crumbled
Napkins & Paper Towels
Uncoated Paper Plates
Yard Waste
Manures*
Dryer Lint
Untreated Sawdust
Hair
Natural Fibers

*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

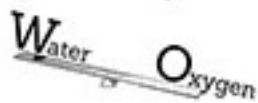
A compost bin is actually a **habitat** for compost "D.O.ers" (**Decomposing Organisms**). Layer the right amounts of **air, water, and food**, and they will produce rich compost.



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.

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.



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:

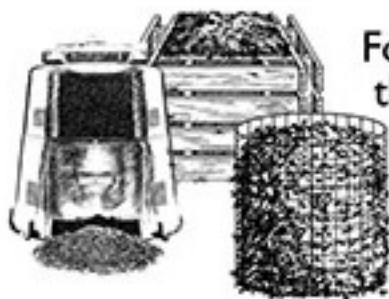
It should look
uniformly dark with
no recognizable food.
(pits & egg shells may persist)



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 to 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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Questions?

visit: cctompkins.org/compost

call: the "Rotline" at 607-272-2292

stop in: 615 Willow Ave; Ithaca, NY

