

What is composting?



Compost is a dark brown, earthy, crumbly material made of decomposed organic matter.

Benefits of Composted Material

When added to soil, compost improves soil porosity and water retention, and provides plants with essential nutrients.

Composting diverts organic materials from the waste stream and our landfills!

How does Material Decompose?

Millions of microorganisms work to break down organic material. We can speed up composting by managing the process.

Contact us

Maine Department of Environmental Protection
Sustainability Division
207-592-0455

COMPOST IT!

- Fruit and vegetable scraps
 - Houseplants
 - Green plant trimmings
- Weeds that have not gone to seed
- Coffee grounds and filters or tea bags
- Bread, pasta, cereal
- Hair
- Grass clippings
- Wilted flowers

- Dry leaves
- Hay or Straw
- Wood chips
- Sawdust (use sparingly)
- Dryer lint

- Dried grass clippings
- Shredded cardboard or paper (mix well to prevent matting)

GREENS

BROWNS

Backyard Composting



Maine Department of Environmental
Protection Guide to Home Composting



KEEP IT OUT!

- Meat, Fish, Dairy products
- Fats, Oils, Peanut butter
- Mayonaise, Salad dressing
- Dog or cat waste
- Wood or charcoal ash

- Grass clippings from herbicide treated lawns
- Glass, Plastic, Metal, or Non-organic materials



How do I start a compost pile?

Start by picking a location.

Look for an area that is:

- ✓ Well -drained and close to level
- ✓ In partial shade, to help with water retention
- ✓ At least 1 -foot away from walls, fences, bushes, trees etc.
- ✓ A convenient spot to place materials and to get the end product to its final location



Image courtesy Kristy Hall, Flickr

What tools will I need?

These tools may help get you started:

- Compost bin
- Pitchfork (compost turner)
- Chipper/shredder
- Wheelbarrow (for transport)
- Garden hose
- 4' X 12' Sturdy coated wire mesh (to form cylinder to contain compost pile, if desired)

Building the pile

Step 1

Loosen the soil where you will place your compost. You may also want to pile a 4" to 6" layer of twigs on top of the soil to encourage airflow at the bottom of the pile.



Step 2

Gather Your Materials

Have a shovel, pitchfork, and garden hose ready to mix materials and add moisture as you build! You should have enough material ready to build a 3 ft X 3ft X 3ft pile. Or fill a 4' tall by 4' diameter mesh cylinder.



Step 3

Make a composting-sandwich! Starting with brown materials, alternate layers of 'greens' and 'browns,' mixing materials and adding water as you go. Bury food scraps in the center of the pile, and finish with a brown layer.



Step 4

You can add to a well maintained compost pile year-round. Mixing the ingredients periodically with a shovel or heavy pitchfork will help speed up the composting process.

Step 5

Without adding new materials, your compost should be ready to add to your garden in about a year. Watching your garden flourish from the compost you have created is worth all of the work you put into it!

