

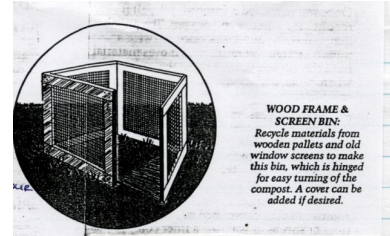
Building a Compost Pile

Building a compost pile.

First, pick a spot.

To start composting, pick the right spot for your compost pile. Look for a convenient section of your backyard that has good drainage and that complies with any applicable codes or regulations.

In some cities, for example, fire regulations prohibit locating a compost area within three feet of any structure. Consult your town or village official for any restrictions.



Select a method.

The easiest way to compost is the pile method. It costs nothing, requires little maintenance and is useful for large quantities of yard waste (such as autumn leaves).

Just put your yard waste in a pile up to five feet high. In 12 to 18 months, the pile will have reduced in size to about one foot and the bottom will have turned to compost.

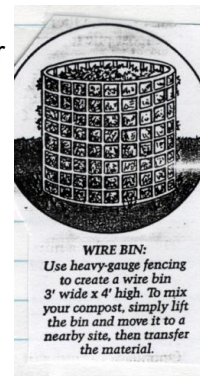


If you prefer, you can use a bin. Compost bins can be purchased at many garden supply and hardware stores, or they can be constructed easily and inexpensively from a variety of materials-the illustrations offer just a few ideas.

In general, a bin can be any shape, but should be approximately three to four feet in diameter and of similar height. Leaving the fourth side open or adding a gate permits easy access for adding and removing materials and turning the compost.

Although bins are good for ongoing composting, they're usually not big enough for large amounts of leaves or grass clippings. To increase your composting capacity, you can put up to three bins side by side.

The most inexpensive composting bins are made from recycled materials-wooden pallets or leftover snow fencing, for example. But if materials aren't readily available, they can usually be purchased for less than \$25. A pre-made bin can be purchased for as little as \$25 to \$50.



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Building a Compost Pile

You're ready to compost.

Depending on the method you've chosen, you can start composting by placing any compostable material (see list under Compost) in a pile or placing it in your compost bin.

Be sure yard waste other than grass (such as brush or twigs) is less than 4" long and no more than 1/8" thick. Also, it's best to mix grass clippings with leaves or other garden materials. This hastens the decomposition process.

Once you've started a compost pile, all it requires is moisture and oxygen. Turning the materials with a pitchfork once or twice a month increases aeration and moves material from the outside of the pile to the center, where it can decompose faster and more completely.

As the weeks pass, you can continue adding waste material to your bin or pile. There's no need to worry when winter comes— the composting process continues, but much more slowly. Then, when temperatures rise in the spring, the process picks up speed again.

When your compost is ready, use it as a soil additive in your flower bed or as mulch around trees or shrubs. If you like a finer compost, use an old metal screen to sift out any waste that hasn't completely decomposed.

One word of caution: If you use weed killers or insecticides on your lawn, don't use the resulting compost in your vegetable garden. It's fine, however, for the rest of your yard.

Compost

Many types of yard waste can be composted, including:

- Leaves
- Grass clippings (as long as they're mixed with other yard waste)
- Plant cuttings (unless they're diseased)

Other organic materials can be composted, too, such as:

- Sawdust and wood shavings
- Small amounts of fireplace ash

If you desire, you can also compost certain types of kitchen waste, although we recommend using a closed bin to prevent compost from attracting animals.

Add:

- Fruit and vegetable peels and leftovers
- coffee grounds and filters
- tea bags
- empty egg shells

Do not add eggs, dairy products, meat scraps, bones, grease, fish, kitty litter or barbeque briquets.

This information is provided from OCRRA Pamphlet "Earth Friendly Ways to Manage Yard Waste"



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