Composting:

An easy winter sport - no Olympians needed!

Even though your compost might freeze solid and the decomposition might come to a complete stop, there is no need to stop composting in Winter. In fact, the freeze-thaw cycles will help to break down the materials that you are adding, so they will decompose even faster when spring arrives. As air temperatures warm up in the spring, microbial activity will resume.

Keep in mind; a compost pile needs the right amount of air and water (in addition to carbon and nitrogen) to be successful. So, when that winter snow and spring rain keeps on coming, your pile can get drenched. While water in the summer may be a necessary amendment, too much winter water will force air out of pore spaces in your compost pile, suffocating our dear aerobic bacteria friends.

In the spring, if your compost pile does not heat up, the cause may be one or more of the following: too small a pile, not enough nitrogen, lack of oxygen, too much moisture, or not enough moisture. Turn the pile with a spading fork or shovel regularly. Turning will introduce oxygen and un-decomposed material into the center and subsequently regenerate heating.

When is the compost cooking correctly? When the pile has flies, earwigs, slugs and/or other insects, and there maybe white material throughout the pile.
The white cobweb materials are actinomycete, part of the microbial community.

The composting process is essentially complete when the organic material crumbles easily. At this point you should **not** be able to recognize the material that you put in the original pile last summer/fall. The composting process in the average pile takes about 6 to 8 months, though an ideally mixed and tended pile may take less than 8 weeks to become compost.

For more reading-

Backyard Composting In Oklahoma

Turning: The key to Quick Composting

The Science of Composting