



Composting

Composting Bin

Construct or purchase an appropriate bin for your situation and available resources. You can easily make a wood-sided bin with a screen bottom and top or purchase a pre-fab bin. Either way, you will want to be able to turn your compost pile at intervals to allow for best aeration and decomposition.

Starting a Pile

1. **Start your compost pile on bare earth.** This allows worms and other beneficial organisms to aerate the compost and be transported to your garden beds.
2. **Lay twigs or straw first,** a few inches deep. This aids drainage and helps aerate the pile.
3. **Add compost materials in layers,** alternating moist and dry. Moist ingredients are food scraps, tea bags, seaweed, etc. Dry materials are straw, dead leaves, sawdust pellets, and wood ashes. If you have wood ashes, sprinkle in thin layers, or they will clump together and be slow to break down.
4. **Add manure,** green manure (clover, buckwheat, wheatgrass, grass clippings) or any nitrogen source. This activates the compost pile and speeds the process along.
5. **Keep compost moist.** Water occasionally, or let rain do the job.
6. **Cover** with anything you have – wood, plastic sheeting, carpet scraps. Covering helps retain moisture and heat, two essentials for compost. Covering also prevents the compost from being over-watered by rain. The compost should be moist, but not soaked and sodden.
7. **Turn.** Every few weeks give the pile a quick turn with a pitchfork or shovel. This aerates the pile. Oxygen is required for the process to work, and turning “adds” oxygen. You can skip this step if you have a ready supply of coarse material like straw. Once you’ve established your compost pile, add new materials by mixing them in, rather than by adding them in layers. Mixing, or

turning, the compost pile is key to aerating the composting materials and speeding the process to completion. If you want to buy a composter, rather than build your own compost pile, you may consider a buying a rotating compost tumbler which makes it easy to mix the compost regularly.

Using Finished Compost

You may want to screen your finished compost to remove stubborn organic material like sticks or large pits. You can shake the compost over 1x1 gauge screen before you mix into your garden.

Once a satisfactory texture, mix into your annual, perennial, or vegetable garden to promote fertility and plant growth.

(Source: eartheasy.com)

