

## **Recycling—In Your Garden, For Your Garden**

We see it each year in the spring, again mid-summer, then again late summer. Bags of fertilizer and weed killer spread over turf grasses in hopes of having lush lawns. Sprays for fungus and sprays for plant diseases. Bags of soil amendments to loosen clay soil or make sandy soil hold more water. Sometimes gardening seems like a war against wild nature . . . and a costly one at that. There is a great way, though, of reducing these battles and reducing the cost of maintaining your landscape and gardens. **COMPOSTING!**

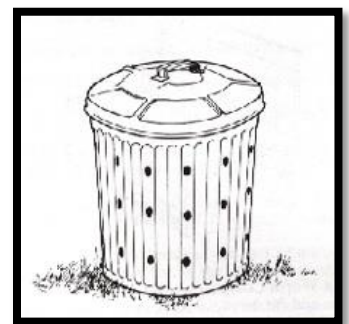


Composting is an old-fashioned practice that went out of vogue during the industrial development. But more and more gardeners are now realizing it's a practice that presents a more sustainable and healthier method of growing flower and vegetable gardens and maintaining healthier plants in landscapes. It's easy to do, it helps you, and it helps your environment.

Compost is organic matter that has decomposed into a form that plants can use for growth. It happens in the natural world without human intervention. Composting simply allows the gardener to take advantage of that natural process and control it for beneficial use. Essentially, it's recycling organic material that would otherwise go to waste.

Compost enriches poor soil, provides a slow release of nutrients - even important micronutrients that most chemical fertilizers don't even have. It teems with beneficial microbes that help plant roots absorb water and nutrients more efficiently. Compost can even provide your plants with protection from certain diseases. All of this at no cost to you – what a deal!

Think of all the bags of leaves, autumn and spring, left curbside for trash haulers. Think of all the vegetable trimmings and fruit peels that are thrown out: broccoli stems, celery cores, wilted lettuce leaves, unused limp carrots – this list goes on and on. Think of the coffee grounds and filters and tea bags that are tossed in the garbage. All these can be mixed with crushed dried leaves and dried grasses and recycled into earthy-smelling compost rich with nutrients for your gardens. Again, at no cost.



**Garbage can or barrel**



Yard trimmings, grass clippings and fallen leaves can make up 25% - 28% of a typical community's landfill waste. Not only is this a waste of usable organic material, but a dangerous waste as well. When organic material decomposes in landfills, it doesn't receive oxygen as it does in composting. In landfills, the decomposition creates methane which is a potent greenhouse gas that can trap 28% - 36% more heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide.

When you compost, you recycle valuable organic material - material that your plants will love and material that will improve their health. If you use compost, your lawn, trees, shrubs, flowers, and vegetables all will reward you with stronger growth and fewer health issues.

Take a look the resources shown below. They have information on starting a compost program, items that can be composted as well as those that should not be composted. They will give you ideas and expertise to help you on your compost adventure.

Good Gardening!

[Backyard Composting in Oklahoma-OSU fact sheet HLA-6448](#)

[Home Composting Guide-Penn State University Extension](#)

[Home and Backyard Composting-North Carolina State Univ Extension](#)

[EPA-Information on gases created in landfills](#)