Composting Made Simple

What is compost?
Composting is the natural decomposition of wastes containing plant remains and other once-living materials to make an earthy, dark, crumbly substance that is excellent for adding to nutrients to soil.

What to add to compost?
Fruit and vegetable peelings, grass clippings, weeds, tea bags, coffee grounds, egg shells, newspapers, old potting mix, dead flowers, dried leaves free from pests, human and animal hair.

DO NOT add meat, fish, dairy products and cooked food in compost.

4 Easy steps to great compost

1 Choose the site or suitable Bin
Look for a site with good drainage, easy access and lots of sun shine and some shade.

2 Composting ingredients
You will need a mixture of GREEN & BROWN:

- **Nitrogen rich** kitchen scraps such as fruit and vegetable peelings and green yard items as fresh grass clippings, green leaves, weeds and manure (cow’s dung).
- **Carbon-rich** brown yard items such as dried leaves, woody twigs and branches, paper, cardboard, and paddy husk.
- Some water to keep things moist.
- Some soil organisms (earthworms) to decompose materials at a faster rate and to loosen soil.

3 Layering
To build compost, start with a thick layer (6 inches) of twigs or coarse mulch at the bottom for drainage. Then the A, B, C steps and repeat steps to build a heap layer upon layer.

4 Maintaining your compost
Add air to compost by turning with a garden fork or stick every week so it doesn’t smell.

Hint
Sprinkling soil or some finished compost on top of food scraps will make a richer compost and help reduce odours.

Hints
- Use a cutlass to chop up the large ingredients for compost heap.
- Keep a well-sealed container in the kitchen to collect ingredients.

Compost problems? Turn over for the Easy Compost Fix-it Guide

Why compost?
Compost is natural, inexpensive and good for the environment. By turning food scraps and garden/yard waste into compost can:
- Improve soil quality and garden vitality
- Conserve water
- Recycle valuable nutrients and reduce the use of artificial fertilisers
- Prevent greenhouse gas emissions and landfill impacts from waste food and yard waste

Did you know?
- About half of what we throw into the garbage is suitable for compost
- These materials can be used to make compost to benefit your garden.
- An excellent source of rich organic fertilizer for chemical-free produce.
Composting is a natural process and doesn’t take much to work out the problems. Some solutions are listed below

The easy compost fix-it guide

Smelly compost?

If it gets too wet or if there is not enough air in the heap your compost can smell bad. A common cause is having too much green (wet) and not enough brown (dry) ingredients in your compost.

Fix it

✓ Add dried leaves to compost
✓ Add wood fire ash (from fire-side) to heap to reduce acidity
✓ Turn the compost to add air
✓ Combine nitrogen-rich ingredients with sawdust or shredded newspaper before adding to the heap
✓ Give your compost heap a ‘floor’ of planks to ensure good drainage

Unwelcome visitors?

Ants, cockroaches, mice or rats can sometimes make your compost their home.

Fix it

✓ Always cover food materials with a layer of green materials or soil - then cover heap with zinc sheet or plastic
✓ Turn the compost to discourage ants and cockroaches
✓ Fine wire under the compost bin or heap helps keep out mice and rats
✓ DO NOT put dairy products, meat and seafood in compost

Compost slow to mature?

A slow composting system can mean that the compost is not hot enough, or there may not be enough air or water.

Fix it

✓ Add nitrogen-rich material, such as kitchen scraps or green garden vegetation.
✓ Turn the heap and add water

The finished product

Ensure compost is ready before using, if not cured can cause damage to plants. Compost is ready when:

✓ It smells earthy, not sour or like ammonia
✓ It no longer heats up after it is turned or watered
✓ It looks like dark soil
✓ It is crumbly, and not identifiable as food items, grass, leaves, etc.

For more information visit
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