

The City of Madison's Guide to

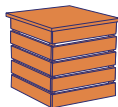
COMPOSTING AT HOME



WHAT YOU NEED TO COMPOST

A container

The minimum size is 3' x 3' x 3'



“Green material”



“Brown material”



Water



Shovel or garden fork



NEED HELP ON BUILDING A CONTAINER?

Check UW-Extension Learning Store for guides

1

GREEN MATERIAL

Flowers & yard plants

Grass clippings

Egg shells

Raw vegetables
(including seeds & cores)

Raw fruits
(including cores & rinds)

Coffee grounds
& tea leaves

BROWN MATERIAL

Fall leaves

Straw & hay

Wood chips

Clean newsprint

Clean & dry shredded
cardboard

WHAT NOT TO COMPOST

Diapers

Compostable Plastics

All meat & bones

Dairy products

Pet waste

Treated wood

Invasive plants

Oils, greases, and fats

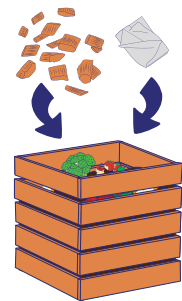
Backyard composting does not get hot enough to decompose these materials. They can attract pests, make odors, and create dangerous pathogens in your compost.

2

STEPS TO FOLLOW

1

Layer three parts “brown material” for every one part “green material.”



2

When you add more green, cover it with a layer of browns.

3

Water compost so it is damp like a wrung-out sponge.



4

Once a week or so, stir or turn the pile with a shovel or garden fork to introduce air.

5

Repeat steps 1 through 4 until the 3' x 3' x 3' bin is full. Stop adding material at this time.



6

Monitor pile for moisture and progress. Pile should be reducing in size and generate heat. Continue stirring or turning the pile every 7 to 10 days.

7

Compost should have reduced in size by 1/3. Compost will look like dark, crumbly soil with no recognizable “green” or “brown” material. Should have a sweet, earthy smell.

STOP

8

Leave compost alone for three weeks before using to give it time to cure.



9

Use on plants like mulch.

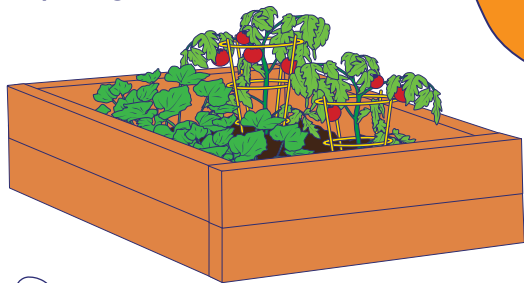
SAVE MONEY

Make your own compost instead of buying it.



SAVE RESOURCES

Return nutrients from your food & yard waste directly to your gardens.



5



6

HELP THE CLIMATE

Food waste in landfills makes methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.



IT'S FUN!



TROUBLESHOOTING

BAD ODOR?

Not enough oxygen. Mix the pile and add more “brown material.”

DRY TO THE TOUCH?

Lacks water. Mix the pile and add water.

SOGGY, AND MAYBE SMELLS BAD?

Mix the pile. Wait to water next time.

PILE IS DAMP, BUT NOT REDUCING OR HEATING RIGHT?

Pile might be too small. Add more browns & greens at the correct ratio and stir.

PILE IS DAMP, SMELLS LIKE COMPOST, BUT NOT REDUCING IN SIZE OR GENERATING HEAT?

Might lack greens. Add more and stir.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Many detailed resources available online, including UW-Extension, the Wisconsin DNR, and the Institute for Local Self Reliance

Access all these composting resources from the City of Madison website

