WHAT IS COMPOST?
Composting is the natural process of breaking down organic matter—anything that comes from a plant or animal—into nutrient-rich material called compost. This process is carried out by millions of decomposer organisms like worms, mites, fungi and microscopic organisms. Composting transforms organic waste from an unstable, rotting state to a stable, rich, earthy state.

WHY COMPOST?
- **IT’S EARTH FRIENDLY**: Almost 25 percent of American household waste is composed of food scraps or yard waste. This means that 59 million tons of the materials in our landfills could have been composted instead. Composting saves landfill space, saves resources and returns valuable material to productive use.
- **IT ENRICHES SOILS**: Compost helps improve soil structure, increases the soil’s ability to hold water and air, enhances soil fertility and stimulates healthy root development.
- **IT HELPS PREVENT POLLUTION**: When compost is applied to land, it does not contribute to pollution. In fact, it actually helps prevent pollution by encouraging the decomposition of materials that otherwise contribute to pollution.
- **IT’S EASY**: Composting can be as easy as you want to make it. For an easy compost pile, just layer green and brown wastes.

WHAT IS VERMICOMPOSTING?
Vericomposting uses wormy to process organic material. Because vericomposting can be done inside, it’s a great option for those living in apartments, or small spaces. To start your own vericomposting process you need only a few simple materials:
- 1. Bin or worms
- 2. Biodegradable bedding (shredded paper or cardboard)
- 3. Worms
- 4. Food waste

WHAT NOT TO ADD:
- Meat, fish or bones
- Dairy products, grease, lard or oils
- Fruits and vegetables
- Paper towels or newspapers

CHOOSE A COMPOSTING SYSTEM:
You don’t need many materials to start composting. Choose a composting system—bin, pile, vermicomposting or worm bin—based on your needs. Compost which system is best for you? See below.

COMPOSTING FAQS:
Q: Can I compost my pet waste?
A: Pet wastes from cats, dogs and other pets contain pathogenic organisms that can be transmitted to humans. Most home composting operations do not reach the temperatures needed to destroy these pathogens. Mammals from plant-eating animals, such as horses, rabbits, goats or animals can be safely composted in a hot pile (see directions on this poster).

Q: What happens to my compost during the winter?
A: The composting process produces heat as a byproduct, which means that many compost piles will stay warm and keep working well below temperatures designed to freeze. In a cold Wisconsin winter, though, most home compost piles will eventually slow down or freeze. Don’t worry; composting will start again as spring sets in. To keep composting throughout the winter, you can use a covered pile. Tip: make a hole in the compost pile before it freezes and keep a container of dry browns nearby. Put your food scraps in the hole and cover with a couple of inches of the browns.

Q: How long will it take to produce usable compost?
A: Depending on which method you choose, composting can take anywhere from 3-18 months. Chopping or shredding compostable materials into smaller pieces and turning the pile regularly (about once per week) will speed up the process.

Q: How often should I turn my compost?
A: You turn your compost as often as little as you would like. Easy compost (see directions on this poster) can be turned every week or at all. Hot piles should be turned about once a week. In general, turning compost on a regular weekly schedule will help produce finished compost more quickly.

Q: What can I do with finished compost?
A: Compost can be added to lawns and gardens as a soil amendment to improve soil structure and health. Compost can also be used as mulch to reduce weeds, prevent erosion and maintain moisture.

Q: Will my compost stink?
A: Compost should smell like soil. Always bury food waste in the pile to prevent odor and keep away pests. If your compost is smelly, that’s a sign that it needs more air. Turn the pile regularly to promote break down and aerate the pile.

Q: Will it take a lot of space to make compost?
A: No, it won’t use up a lot of space. For fruit and vegetable waste and yard trimmings, just at a slower rate. You can make 2 cubic feet of finished compost from three to eight months. Use the unfinished material to continue your pile.

Q: What is the composting system I should choose?
A: Completed compost is dark brown, crumbly, and has an earthy odor. You should not see any of the original materials in completed compost. Compost is usually a very dark color, black, and is rich in nutrients. For an easy compost pile, just layer green and brown wastes.

Q: What is the best way to add compost to my gardens and lawns?
A: Compost can be added to lawns and gardens as a soil amendment to improve soil structure and health. Compost can also be used as mulch to reduce weeds, prevent erosion and maintain moisture.

Q: WILL IT MAKE MY LAWN GRASS GREENER?
A: It makes your lawn healthier by increasing the water and air-holding capacity of the soil. It enriches your soil and stimulates healthy root development.

Q: WILL IT MAKE MY LAWN GROW FASTER?
A: It makes your lawn greener by increasing the water and air-holding capacity of the soil. It makes your lawn healthier by stimulating healthy root development.

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OPEN PILES AND WIRE OR WOOD ENCLOSURES:
- **For fruit, vegetable and yard trimmings**:
  - **Browns**: Any coarse, unfinished material after three to eight months.
  - **Greens**: Use the unfinished material to continue your pile.

Vericomposting uses a special kind of worm called redworms, which eat a large amount of food waste and live well in a humid environment. The bedding gives their worms a place to work and helps maintain optimum balance in the worm bin. Use leaves, fluffy, biodegradable materials like straw or peat moss. Redworms for bedding must be clean, well drained and moist. For fruit and vegetable waste and yard trimmings, just at a slower rate.

COVERED BINS:
- **For fruit, vegetable and yard trimmings**:
  - **Browns**: Pet wastes from cats, dogs and other pets contain pathogens that can be transmitted to humans. Most home composting operations do not reach the temperatures needed to destroy these pathogens. Mammals from plant-eating animals, such as horses, rabbits, goats or animals can be safely composted in a hot pile (see directions on this poster).
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