garbage to GARDENS
Compost Grows
Composting is as easy as 1-2-3

1. **CHOP MATERIALS**
   if you want them to break down more quickly.

2. **MIX “browns” with “greens.”**

3. **KEEP COMPOST AS MOIST as a wrung-out sponge. Water as needed to maintain moisture balance.**

A basic compost pile needs only four ingredients: browns, greens, air and moisture. Browns are carbon-rich, dry materials like branches, leaves, paper and sawdust. Greens are nitrogen-rich, moist materials like grass clippings, fruits and vegetables.

**WHAT IS VERMICOMPOSTING?**

Vermicomposting uses worms to transform organic material. Because vermicomposting can be done inside, it’s a great option for those living in apartments, or small spaces.

To start your own vermicomposting process you need only a few simple materials:

1. Bin or worm post
2. Bedding (shredded paper or cardboard)
3. Worms
4. Food waste

**THE BIN**

Choose a bin for your worms that is less than 18" deep and has a large surface area. The bin can be metal, untreated wood or plastic. Choose a bin that allows your worms to stay warm and dry. A gentle rim to allow two square feet of bin space for every person in your household or classroom. Do not add drainage tunnels to the base of your container.

**THE BEDDING**

Bedding gives your worms a place to work and rest and helps maintain optimum balance in the worm bin. Use light, fluffy, biodegradable materials like bran, peat moss, or shredded cardboard. Shred 8-10 pounds of bedding for a 2' x 2' bin. Put in three inches of bedding for the first feeding.

**CHOICE OF BIN MATERIALS:**

The bin material should not be put in the worm bin.

**WHAT TO ADD:**

- Meat, fish or bones
- Soiled diapers
- Soddy diapers
- Black walnut tree leaves or twigs
- Yards trimmings treated with chemical pesticides
- Treated or painted wood

**WHAT NOT TO ADD:**

- Soiled or treated paper towels
- Chopped yard trimmings (leaves, branches, twigs)
- Houseplants
- Used potting soil
- Wood chips
- Cotton or wool rugs
- Soot
- Black walnut tree leaves or twigs
- Yards trimmings treated with chemical pesticides

**MIXED COMPOSTING**

For fruit and vegetable waste and yard trimmings

- Fruit, vegetable and yard trimmings (green and brown waste)

Put yard trimmings in your pile or bin anywhere you are using mixed waste. Chop trimmings into pieces 1" or smaller for faster composting. Put fruit scraps in the middle of your pile. Add yard trimmings or leaves. Layer browns and greens together.

Maintain compost by using bedding to help keep your compost moist and move your pile regularly (about once a week). Turn the pile once a week to speed up the process, but it is not necessary to turn as you would with flower. Leave top layer alone for at least two months. Use the unfinished material to continue your pile.

**COMPOSTING FAQS**

**Q:** Can I compost my pet waste?

**A:** Pet wastes from cats, dogs and other pets contain pathogens that can be transmitted to humans. Most home composting operations don’t reach the temperatures needed to destroy those pathogens. Must use from-planting animals, such as horses, rabbits, goats or other 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 after temperatures dip below freezing. In a cold Wisconsin winter, though, most home compost piles will eventually slow down or freeze. Don’t worry; composting will start again as soon as spring sets in. Keep composting throughout the winter, you can use a covered pile bin. 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 3–6 months. Chopping and 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 can turn your compost as often or as little as you would like. Easy compost (see directions on this poster) can be turned once or not 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:** How will I know when my compost is ready to be used?

**A:** Completed compost is dark brown, crumbly, and has an earthy odor. You should not see any of the original materials in completed compost.

**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.

**WHY COMPOST?**

- It helps prevent pollution
- It enriches soils
- 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, spares resources and returns valuable material to productive use.

**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 unwanted, rotting state to a stable, rich, earthy state.

**GREENS**

- Fruits and vegetables (unwashed)
- Dry and vacuum lint
- Coffee grounds and filters
- Grass clippings and young weeds
- Paper tea bags (staple removed)

**BROWNS**

- Cotton or wool rugs
- Dry and vacuum lint
- Eggshells
- Nut shells
- Fireplace ashes
- Sawdust
- Hay and straw

**COMPOST CONTENT CREDITS:**

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**GROWTH CHEMISTRY:**

In the process of breaking down organic matter, soil organisms like worms, produce methane, a greenhouse gas 21 times more powerful than carbon dioxide. Composting these materials means they don’t go to the landfill and are put to work in farms and gardens instead.

**IT’S EASY**

Composting can be as easy as you want it to be. For an easy compost pile, just layer green and brown wastes.

**EASY COMPOSTING:**

For yard trimmings only

- Yard trimmings

- Solids (green and brown waste)

- Sheet composting shredded trimmings into the bin or pile as you generate them.

- Maintain compost by keeping it moist as a wrung-out sponge.

- Harvest rich, brown compost from the bottom and center of the pile after 12–18 months.

**MAKING HOT COMPOSTING:**

Not composting follows the basic 1-2-3 method of composting (above) and uses a larger pile (at least 3'x3'x3'). Under these conditions, heat builds up quickly and the pile decomposes faster than a small pile. To speed up the composting process, you can add more moisture, but make sure not to add water. Cold pile will still help break down yard waste, just at a slower rate.

*COMPOST GROWS Poster Design Contest*