

## Compost Basics

### Speed Up Nature-Compost!

Your compost pile is a living system. Microbes are the work horses of your pile. Keep the bacteria and fungi happy and they will work to make compost faster for you. It's all about managing your pile.

**What do microbes need? Same as us.**

Food	Carbon + Nitrogen
Water	Damp as a wrung out sponge
Oxygen	Turn the pile regularly to fluff up air channels
Temperature	Best above 50 degrees outside

### What do you need to compost?

1. Buy or make a bin-commercial or home built
2. Feed the microbes:

**2 handfuls of brown or carbon** + **1 handful of green or nitrogen**  
(dried plant material, shredded paper, etc) (green plant material, food scraps of other nitrogen)

3. Layer 2ft browns then 1 ft greens. Top layer is ALWAYS brown to manage odors & hold in moisture.
4. Water as build pile.
5. Turn once evry week or two to add oxygen.
6. Cure 4 weeks, once appears like dark & crumbly, to mature the compost.

**Hot Pile:** Build all at once as a batch. Microbes multiply; Pile heats up to 132-140 degrees F. Turn weekly so each part of pile gets hot & kills weed seeds and most diseases.

**Cold Pile:** Build as you get materials. Top layer ALWAYS browns. Turn when you can. Don't add weed seeds or diseased plants.

### How soon can I get finished compost?

Fast, hot method: 2-6 months if keep microbes happy.

Slow, cool method: 1-2 years

### Finished compost is:

dark brown, crumbly & don't recognize leaves, grass, food scraps  
smells earthy like greenhouse  
won't reheat

## Compost Uses

Add to Soil	dig into top 4-6 inches of soil
Use as Mulch	2-3 inches to top of soil around flowers, vegetables, trees & shrubs
Mix in potting soil	see recipes below
Lawn Top Dressing	screen with 1/2" hardware cloth attached to wooden frame
Compost Tea	Soak bag of compost in water & add oxygen with a fish aerator to increase

microbial populations. Spray on lawns, garden & houseplants.

**"YES" Items**

grass clippings  
leaves  
weeds/garden debris  
small brush, twigs  
wood ash (small amounts)  
sawdust/wood chips (small amounts)  
egg shells  
coffee grounds  
hay  
manure from herbivores (plant eaters)  
paper, cardboard  
fur, hair, natural fibers & feathers  
food scraps - only if buried in pile

**"NO" Items**

meat, bones, fat  
dairy products  
oils - cooking & salad  
whole branches, logs  
pet or human waste  
charcoal briquette ash  
sawdust from treated wood  
diseased plants (unless hot composted)  
persistent weeds (quack grass)  
thorny branches

**Troubleshooting**

<b>Too Dry</b> wrung out sponge	Crackles to touch	Add water. Keep pile damp as a
<b>Too Wet</b> watering till dries	Soggy; may smell	Turn to add Oxygen. Hold off
<b>All Green</b>	Pile mats, smells bad	Turn pile & add brown
<b>Meat, fat, salad oils</b>	Pile mats, smells and attracts varmints	Remove meat, fat of materials with oil

**Recipe List**

**Recipe #1:** 2 parts garden loam + 1 part fine, sharp sand + 1 part finished mature compost.

**Recipe #2:** 2 parts soil-less mix + 1 part finished, mature compost

**Recipe #3:** 1 part peat + 1 part perlite + 1 part compost