

# Composting

Conserve Water and Save Money



**Composting is a better option than the garbage disposal because it helps conserve water and saves money!**

## What is Composting?

Composting is intentionally helping organic waste to break down into simpler forms. Microorganisms break down organic kitchen and yard waste, releasing the minerals and nutrients. The end result is compost, a substance that resembles dirt that is full of minerals and nutrients that can be used as fertilizer and soil stabilizer on lawns, gardens, and indoor plants. All organic matter naturally breaks down without help, but composting speeds up the process.

## Why Compost?

Composting is a better option than using a garbage disposal because it helps conserve water and saves money. Garbage disposals use electricity and a lot of water to push the food waste through the system, which costs money. Additionally, garbage disposals are hard on the wastewater system, increasing the waste load and causing blockages. Depending how you decide to compost, composting has no operating costs.

Compost adds nutrients to soil and decreases the need for chemical fertilizers. The fluffy, cake-like texture of compost both increases the drainage of clay soils and binds together sandy soils. That enriches the soil and increases its ability to retain moisture. As a result, gardens and lawns require less watering and it eliminates the need for chemical fertilizers.

## What Can Be Composted?

- Add “green” materials like produce scraps, eggshells, tea bags, coffee grounds, and yard trimmings, which generate nitrogen.
- Add “brown” materials like cardboard, newspaper, dead leaves, vacuum cleaner lint, and hay, which add carbon can also be added.
- Use a compost crock in your kitchen as a nice neat way of containing the waste until you put it in the compost bin or pile.
- Do not add pesticide or herbicide treated yard trimmings or charcoal.
- Do not add diseased plants, fats, pet droppings, dairy products or meats. They will attract pests to the pile and can spread disease.



Add green materials to your compost such as scraps, eggshells, tea bags, coffee grounds and yard trimmings.



Find a nice, sunny spot in your yard to start a compost pile.



Try using a compost crock in the kitchen as a neat way of containing waste until it is put in the compost bin or pile.



## The Basics of Composting

- Find a nice sunny spot in your yard, on your porch, or where ever works best for you to put your compost bin or pile. Compost decomposes fastest between 120 and 160 degrees Fahrenheit. Decomposition will occur at lower temperatures, but it takes much longer.
- You can compost in a tumbler, a bin, or just a pile on the ground. Composting bins can be purchased at local garden and hardware stores or you can make your own.
- Help start a new compost pile with aged manure, cottonseed meal, alfalfa meal, blood meal, or compost starter.
- Your compost should have an equal weight of green and brown material. Too much of any one material will slow down the composting process.
- Keep your compost aerated. Mixing up the contents gives the pile oxygen so that it can break down effectively and does not smell bad. For faster results, use a compost turner every two weeks to aerate your pile.
- Do not let the compost completely dry out because compost piles need moisture to keep the composting process active. Compost piles should main damp like a wrung out sponge, but not too wet so that it gets soggy and starts to stink.

## Taking Care of a Compost

- Finished compost should look, feel, and smell like rich, dark soil and the original contents should be unrecognizable. It is usually less than half the volume of the materials you started with, but much denser.
- Soak finished compost in water to “brew” compost “tea,” a nutrient-rich liquid that can be used to water plants.
- Apply finished compost to your garden about 2-4 weeks before you plant to give the compost time to integrate and stabilize within the soil.
- Be sure to save a bit of finished compost to start the next batch. The rich microbial life within that compost will start the process quickly the next time around.

**Start your own compost today!**

**1** Composting helps break down organic waste into simpler forms, releasing nutrients and minerals. The end result is a substance that resembles dirt and is full of minerals to be used as fertilizer and a soil stabilizer.

**2** Garbage disposals require a lot of water to push the food through the waste system, so composting can save electricity and water!

**3** Composting is easy to start and depending on how it is done, has no operating costs.



A tumbler, bin or pile on the ground will all work great for proper composting.



Always save a small amount of finished compost to start the next batch.