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Backyard Composting

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Recycling!
 Feels Great...Less Filling...
 Tel: 585-344-2580 ext. 5463

What is Compost?

Compost is a dark, crumbly, and earthy-smelling mixture that consists mostly of decayed organic matter. Composting is a simple, natural process. Nature's way of recycling nutrients and returning them to the soil so that they can be used again.

Why make Compost?

Disposing of leaves, grass clippings, and other garden refuse is often a problem for homeowners. This material can be turned into useful compost. Composting can be easier and cheaper than bagging these wastes or taking them to the transfer station. Compost also improves your soil and the plants growing in it.



What can I Compost?

- Use

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Yard Waste | Kitchen Waste |
| Leaves | Egg Shells |
| Weeds | Vegetable Waste |
| Fruit Waste | Grass Clippings |
| Small Brush | Tea Bags |
| Coffee Grounds | |
- Avoid

| | |
|-------------|------------------|
| Bones | Peanut Butter |
| Butter/Lard | Sour Cream |
| Mayonaise | Vegetable Oil |
| Pet Manure | Meat/Fish Scraps |
| Milk | Cheese |

Compost Maintenance

- Moisture should be moderate.
- Occasionally turn your pile.
- Put kitchen waste deep in the center of the pile to minimize pests.
- Occasionally add a few shovels of soil.
- Insulate your container or pile in the winter, with chips or straw.
- Compost process is finished in approximately 12 months.
- It should be dark brown, crumbly, and have an earth odor.

Compost Problems

Rotten Odor

- Turn pile or add dry materials.
- Make pile smaller.
- Add sawdust, wood chips or straw.

Pests

- Remove meat & fatty food.
- Cover with soil or sawdust.

Low Pile Temperature

- Insulate pile with straw or wood chips
- Add water when turning.
- Add grass clippings.
- Increase pile size.

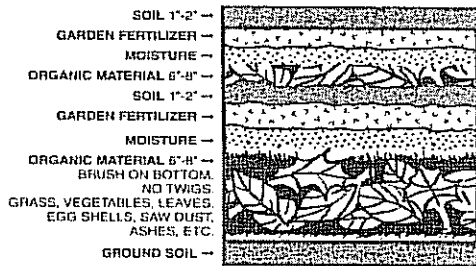
High Pile Temperature

- Reduce pile size.
- Turn pile.

Uses for Compost.

Compost can be used to enrich the flower and vegetable garden, to improve the soil around trees and shrubs, as a soil amendment for houseplants and planter boxes and, when screened, as part of a seed starting mix or lawn top-dressing.

Anatomy of a Compost Bin.



The Compost Pile.

Biology. The compost pile is really a teeming microbial farm. Bacteria start the process of decaying organic matter. They are the first to break down plant tissue and also the most numerous and effective composters. Fungi and protozoans soon join the bacteria and, somewhat later in the cycle, centipedes, millipedes, beetles and earthworms do their parts.

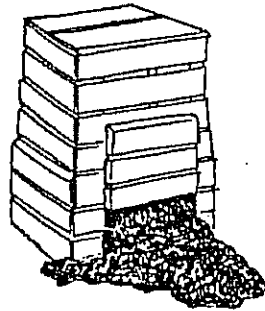
Materials. Carbon and nitrogen, from the cells of dead plants and dead microbes, fuel their activity. The microorganisms use the carbon in leaves or woodier wastes as a energy source. Nitrogen provides the microbes with the raw element of proteins to build their bodies.

Surface Area. The more surface area the microorganisms have to work on, the faster the materials are decomposed. Chopping your garden wastes with a shovel or machete, or running them through a shredding machine or lawn-mower will speed their composting.

Volume. A large compost pile will insulate itself and hold the heat of microbial activity. Its center will be warmer than its edges. Piles smaller than 27 cu. ft. will have trouble holding this heat, while piles larger than 125 cu. ft. don't allow enough air to reach the microbes at the center.

Moisture & Aeration. All life on Earth needs a certain amount of water and air to sustain itself. The microbes in the compost pile are no different. They function best when the compost materials are about as moist as a wrung out sponge, and are provided with many air passages. Extremes of sun or rain can adversely affect this moisture balance in your pile.

Time & Temperature. The faster the composting, the hotter the pile. If you use materials with a proper C:N ratio, provide a large amount of surface area and a big enough volume, and see that moisture and aeration are adequate, you will have a hot, fast compost.



Seeing is Believing!

The GLOW Region Solid Waste Management Committee has constructed Backyard Composting Education Demonstration Sites at Genesee County Park, Letchworth State Park, and Beaver Meadow Nature Center in North Java (Wyoming County). Many different types of units have been set-up at each site. Directions to the sites are detailed below.

Genesee County Park - Intrepretive Center

Head East on Rte. 63 (from Batavia) or West on Rte. 63 (from Pavilion) to Bethany Center Road. Take the Memorial Drive entrance into the park. Follow Memorial Drive to the Interpretive Center (on the right) approx. 1/4 mile from the entrance to the park. The Demonstration Site is to the left of the entrance.

Letchworth State Park—Trailside Lodge

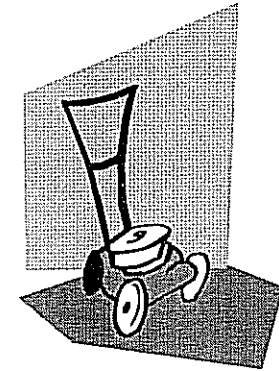
Follow the main road through the park from north to south. Pass the Castile and Perry entrances and the Visitors Center. Trailside Lodge is approx. 1/4 mile south of the Visitors Center on the right. The Demonstration Site is opposite the Lodge.

From the Portageville entrance, travel north past the Glen Iris Inn and Council Grounds. Trailside Lodge is approx. 1/2 mile past the Council Grounds on the left.

Beaver Meadow Nature Center - No. Java

Take Route 98 south to North Java. Turn right on Perry Road, then left on Welch Road. Beaver Meadow Nature Center is approximately 3 miles on the left.

JUST MOW IT! Recycle Your Grass. Don't Bag It.



One of the reasons EPA recommends leaving grass clippings on the lawns is to enhance the natural health of the lawn. As short grass clippings filter to the ground and naturally decompose, nutrients return to the soil and support further turf

growth by supplying part of the lawn's fertilizer needs.

Grass clippings increase the soil's organic matter content, along with its ability to retain moisture and nutrients, to resist erosion, and to maintain cooler temperatures during the summer. Clippings usually contain about 4% potassium, as well as, essential minor elements.

To foster healthy standing grass, do not cut more than one third of the blade off, and no more than one inch total, at any one time (the exact mowing height depends on grass type and climate). During periods of rapid growth in the spring and fall, mowing once every 4 to 7 days is a good bet. Mower blades should be kept sharp and the grass cut only when dry.

Recycling grass clippings makes sense AND it eliminates the backbreaking chore of bagging.