

BACKYARD COMPOSTING

NITROGEN / GREEN MATERIAL:

fruit and vegetable scraps
coffee grounds
loose leaf tea
grass clippings
weeds

CARBON / BROWN MATERIAL:

yard waste (dead leaves, twigs, etc.)
wood chips
uncoated paper products (ripped up)
crushed eggshells
uncoated cardboard (ripped up)
nut shells

MOISTURE:

Should feel like a moist, wrung out sponge. Any more or less and the composting process will be slowed down.

Internal Temp

90-140 °F

Ratio

1:3

Green : Brown

FOR A FASTER BREAKDOWN OF MATERIALS, CHOP OR RIP UP ALL LARGE PIECES OF MATERIAL BEFORE ADDING TO PILE.

DO NOT COMPOST:

Animal bones & meat
Citrus peels & onions (too acidic)
Dairy
Shiny or glossy paper
Diseased plants
Anything oily or fatty
Treated wood or large branches

1

Pick a location for your pile (minimum of 3'x3'x3'). Sunlight in the morning and shade at night is ideal. You can use pallets, chicken wire, or other containers. Using a commercially available compost bin can help easily manage materials, moisture & temperature.

2

Start your pile with a layer of brown material. Next, add green material along with a small scoop of some existing compost or soil from your yard to get things started. The microorganisms from the added soil will begin the process of breaking your scraps down. Remember your ratio!

3

Spray with water after every few layers to ensure the pile is uniformly moist. To know if your pile has the right amount of moisture, squeeze some of the material in your hand and it should yield a few drops of water.

4

Occasionally turn your compost mixture to provide aeration and speed up the composting process. A good average is 2x per week. Adding a bit of soil to each layer is also helpful, but not required!

5

Once your pile is full, stop adding material and wait for 1 to 6 months to allow the material to break down. Remember that materials, heat, and moisture all affect the speed of your pile.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Sunny spot = More water
Shady spot = More time to break down
Inconvenient spot = Less use

6

IS THERE A COOL, DARK EARTHY SMELL TO THE PILE? IF SO, **YOU ARE DONE!** USE IT NOW OR STORE FOR FUTURE USE. ONLY ADD A MAXIMUM OF 2 INCHES IN DEPTH TO YOUR GARDEN, FLOWER POTS, ETC.

FLIP OVER FOR MORE INFORMATION



MORE INFORMATION



- **MAKE SURE YOUR FOOD SCRAPS ARE FULLY COVERED BY YOUR BROWN MATERIAL TO PREVENT UNWANTED VISITS FROM CRITTERS.**
- **IF NOT IMMEDIATELY DUMPING SCRAPS IN THE COMPOST, STORE FOOD SCRAPS IN THE FREEZER OR A SEALED 5 GALLON BUCKET TO PREVENT ANY ODORS OR BUGS.**
- **REMOVE FINISHED COMPOST FROM OUR TUMBLERS BY PLACING A CONTAINER UNDERNEATH, OPENING THE FINISHED SIDE UPSIDE DOWN, AND LETTING GRAVITY DO THE REST!**

TROUBLESHOOTING YOUR COMPOST PILE:

SYMPTOM	PROBLEM	SOLUTION
Unpleasant odor	Not enough air	Turn the pile daily until the odor is gone
Center of pile is dry	Not enough water	Moisten materials while turning the pile
Compost is damp and warm	Pile is too small	Collect more material and mix the pile in the middle (but nowhere else)
Pile will not heat up	Lack of nitrogen	Mix in green material
Animals (including rodents and insects in pile)	Too much wet material or Exposed food scraps	Add dry, brown material & mix Bury all food scraps, double check for unsuitable food scraps
Pile is hot to the touch	Needs time to finish	Leave alone & revisit after a minimum of a few weeks

FOOD SCRAP DROP-OFFS:

Would you rather us compost your food scraps instead? Visit our compost page and find the drop-off location closest to you! You'll be providing material for use in various Knoxville community gardens!



If you have any further questions about backyard composting, you may call the **compost hotline** at:

(865) 215-3554

or

(865) 215-2340

How to assemble our compost tumblers:



COMPOSTING IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT...

- Helps the soil retain moisture and nutrients, acting as a 'conditioner'.
- Attracts beneficial organisms to the soil and reduces the need for pesticides and fertilizers.
- Reduces the potential for soil erosion and improves its structure.
- Saves money and space by diverting easily degradable food scraps and materials from the landfill.
- Sequesters carbon in the soil.

