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Easy In-Garden Compost Method

by

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The secret to a thriving garden and healthy food is to start with healthy soil. One of THE easiest and cheapest ways to create healthy soil is through composting.

What is Compost?

Compost is decomposing organic matter. Composting is nature's process of decomposition.

Fully decomposed matter is called Humus. Humus is one of the most important things you can add to your garden and is the basis for all sustainable gardening.

Healthy soil is called Humus.

[def: A dark-brown or black organic substance made up of decayed plant or animal matter. Humus provides nutrients for plants and increases the ability of soil to retain water OR The dark organic material in soils, produced by the decomposition of vegetable or animal matter and essential to the fertility of the earth.]

I recommend having either a **compost system, worm farm or both**. These will supply your garden with rich, organic matter to help improve your soil. It's also useful when planting out seedlings, shrubs and trees.

Read more here... <http://soiltosupper.com/whats-the-difference-between-composting-and-worms-farms/>

Using a plastic garbage bin as a Compost Bin – cheap and easy!

- cut out the base and drill a few air holes in the side.
- place this directly in garden beds or around fruit trees to feed your trees.
- to empty out compost just lift the bin and spread the compost over the soil.
- you can plant directly into the compost.

TIP – use any size or shape compost bin to suit your garden. Many styles are available at your local stores.

Locate your compost system...

- directly in-garden
- near the house if possible for quick access
- in full sun - compost heats up from the organisms, but full sunshine helps keep it warm, especially during cooler months
- on the soil - connect the contents to the earth
- access to water
- easy access for collecting compost when ready

Compost Ingredients:

Carbon – brown, dead, old and dry, eg mulch, newspaper, shredded paper, dry leaves, saw dust. You can also use tissues, paper towels (no chemicals used on these) or serviettes. I keep all old office paper and soak it in water (helps to break down) before putting in the compost as a carbon layer.

Carbon supports fungi.

Nitrogen - green and fresh, eg; fresh food scraps, lucerne (green), manures, compost, coffee grounds, fresh weeds and grass clippings, blood and bone, Comfrey, Pigeon Pea, Arrowroot and other greens. Keep a small bin in the kitchen for all food scraps. To help keep the bin clean line the base with a paper towel, piece of newspaper or old office paper. Just tip the whole lot in the compost when full, paper included.

Nitrogen supports bacteria.

Water - compost should be damp, not soaking.

Air - is present in the building process and added when mixed or turned.

Activators - high Nitrogen and gets the micro-organisms going, eg molasses, worm juice, liquid fertilisers, comfrey (leaves & home-made comfrey tea), old compost and even small freshly dead animals (yuk) can be used to activate the pile....

Now to start your compost bin system...

- Have all the ingredients ready.
- Place the compost bin flat on the ground in a suitable location.
- Gloves and dust mask on.
- Fill the bin with layered ingredients until it's full to the top.
- Put some old compost on the ground to start the process
- Carbon - dry leaves, dry lawn clippings, mulch
- Nitrogen - food scraps or garden clippings
- Carbon - mulch

- Activator
- Nitrogen
- Carbon
- Water
- Nitrogen
- Carbon
- etc...until bin is full
- Pour a full watering can made up of diluted liquid fertiliser, [comfrey tea](#) or worm juice all over the contents. This helps to activate the mix and get the micro-organisms working throughout.
- Always finish with a carbon layer, eg sugar cane mulch
- Keep moist, but not too wet.

What to do now?

Leave the compost bin to rest for a few days. Then remove the lid and there should be moisture on the inside of the lid. **This is a good indication that the mix is damp enough and starting to heat up.**

You can now add your kitchen scraps, garden clippings or other green nitrogen ingredients.

Always top with a layer of mulch and water.

TIP - *You could add a watering can of diluted worm juice, comfrey tea, seaweed solution or other liquid fertiliser to help the decomposing process.*

Place the lid back on after adding ingredients.

Continue to add ingredients until bin is completely full, generally two weeks, then let the bin rest while starting another bin in different location, e.g. another garden bed.

You may need to loosen mix with a fork to add air if mix is too damp.

The first load of compost should be ready in about 4 - 6 weeks and to use in your garden. This is great for feeding trees, planting shrubs or seedlings or to improve soil before planting.

Some problems you may find...

Smelly, too wet, sour or rotten – too much water, not enough air and not enough carbon. Add more carbon and turn the mix to allow for more air flow.

Always top with a layer of carbon. Never leave food scraps uncovered as the mix will not decompose and there will be small flies in the bin.

Dry and not decomposing or ants have moved in – there's too much carbon and not enough water. Add more nitrogen, eg lawn clippings, comfrey, plant clippings or food scraps.

Water the ingredients with a watering can of diluted liquid fertiliser. (Comfrey Tea would work well now) You could also add more activators or manures to help heat the mix up.

If you follow these steps and the compost still doesn't work then take it all apart and start again.

I'm sure it will work for you the next time. If not, then contact me and I can help you successfully create compost!!

If you have any questions please post a comment and images to our Soil to Supper Facebook Club (www.facebook.com/groups/soiltosupperclub) and I'll assist you. Also join in on daily themes, plus loads of other info to learn and grow!

To gain deeper knowledge of gardening, access garden guides, support, masterclass, and more, consider becoming a member of the Soil to Supper Community...and enjoy successfully growing more food! All the details here - <http://soiltosupper.com/community/>

I would love to know if this method has helped your garden, so please comment in the Facebook Club or email me anytime (cath@soiltosupper.com)

Growing with you,

Cath

It is recommended to use personal protective equipment when undertaking all gardening activities and Soil to Supper is not held responsible for gardeners not adhering to safety requirements while gardening and completing these suggested activities.