

Composting

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Homemade compost is one of the best amendments for our soils. Compost improves drainage, increases aeration, adds water holding capacity, releases nutrients, helps soil warm faster in spring, and increases earthworm and beneficial microorganisms in the soil. Composting employs the natural process of organic materials breaking down into humus, so it will eventually happen to your pile of materials whether you work at it or not.

BASICS – Add equal amounts of green and brown materials (see lists below). The smaller the pieces you add to your pile, the faster they will break down. Stockpiling materials and creating a pile at least 3' by 3' at one time will heat up more, often enough to kill weed seeds, but adding materials as you have them a little at a time is easier. Turning or mixing your materials occasionally will also help the pile rot faster, but is not necessary. Watering your compost is necessary in our climate unless you have an enclosed composter that holds moisture well.

GREEN MATERIALS (High Nitrogen)

Untreated lawn clippings
Weeds with no seeds
Fruit & veggie scraps
Spoiled hay
Manure from non-meat eaters
Coffee grounds

BROWN MATERIALS (High Carbon)

Dry leaves
Shredded paper
Paper napkins, paper towels
Straw
Sawdust
Pine needles

OTHER ADDITIONS

Eggshells, hair, old potting soil, sour milk, bread, pasta

DON'T ADD

Wood ashes – they increase the already high alkalinity of our soil
Meat, fat or bones – attract pests and smell
Manure from meat-eaters – disease concerns
Diseased plant materials, weed seeds, and persistent roots (bindweed)
– most compost piles don't get hot enough to kill microorganisms and seed
Materials treated with pesticides - chemicals may not break down
Any seeds you don't want popping up wherever compost is spread

TROUBLESHOOTING

Bad smell – too wet or too much green material
Nothing happens – too dry or too much brown material

