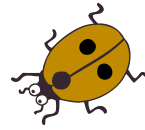




Compost Craze



Composting is nature's way of recycling. It is the natural process of decomposition and recycling of organic material into a rich soil also known as humus (hyōō'məs). Humus is created when organic materials such as leaves, food scraps, paper and **grass clippings** are broken down by bacteria and other organisms, like fungi and **earthworms**, to become part of the earth again. Insects help break the material into smaller bits, then bacteria turn it into humus.



In addition to recycling used **paper** at curbside or drop-off sites, most communities encourage backyard composting, or collect leaves, grass, and other yard trimmings at curbside for composting. **Many collect their leaves and grass in tall paper yard bags.** Some businesses and communities also compost food scraps, as well as soiled papers such as napkins, paper towels, paper plates and cups. **Paper is made primarily from plants**, so returning it to the earth as compost helps restore organic material to depleted soil.

Backyard Composting

Kids can compost too—right in your backyard. You can make a compost pile, or put the materials into a wooden bin. When composting, it's important to include a balance of green, nitrogen-rich materials (wet grass clippings, food scraps) and

Did You Know?

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Each year, more than 4 million families in North America compost. Composting helps reduce the volume of trash in landfills. It also provides nutrients for garden plants, improves soil quality and helps control erosion.



brown, carbon-rich materials (dry leaves, paper products). This balance helps generate a **high temperature** that slowly "cooks" the mixture of green and brown materials, creating a rich new soil that can be used to grow new plants.



Kids Can Make a Difference



Members of The Natural Guard painted a composting and recycling mural on the wall of a local food shelter and helped to distribute yard trim bags and rake leaves for area elderly residents. They also created a large backyard compost pile, and grew fruit and vegetables to give away to neighbors in need.

"First, we selected a spot that was partly shaded by a tree, so that it wouldn't dry out too fast, but would still get sunlight during the day. Then, we dug a hole and filled it with equal amounts of brown and green materials. For brown, we chose shredded paper grocery bags, newspapers and paper towels. For green, we chose leaves and grass clippings, along with old fruits and vegetables (apple cores, banana peels, onion skins, carrot tops) and food scraps (coffee grounds, bread, tea bags). We used a rake to turn the pile every 3-5 days, and made sure to keep it watered, but not soaked, to provide a good environment for bacteria and fungi to grow." —The Natural Guard



Note: The smell of fresh compost usually has a **pleasant, earthy aroma**. If there is a foul odor, the compost pile is lacking oxygen. To correct the problem, **simply mix the brown and green materials by turning the pile.**

The compost is ready when the materials in your pile have been transformed into a rich soil. Now, you can safely use the soil in your home garden.

Fact: Humans have been composting for more than 2,000 years.

