



ARE YOU READY TO COMPOST?

Your Blueprint for Starting Your Own Backyard
Compost

A FIRST LOOK AT STARTING YOUR OWN
BACKYARD COMPOST. NO FUSS, NO
FRILLS, JUST BASIC INFORMATION AND
FIRST STEPS. SO EASY....

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ARE YOU READY TO COMPOST?

Your Blueprint for starting a compost at home.

You are ready if more than a couple of these points concern you:

- You have a garden with poor soil that you want to improve
- You grow fruit and veg that need a boost to improve their health
- You grow flowers that are less than fabulous, darling!
- You are a closet 'greenie' waiting to break out
- The existence of land-fills concerns you
- You are fed up with the cost and poor quality of commercial compost
- You are concerned about the damage done to our land by chemical fertilizers
- You just enjoy 'mucking about' in the garden
- You need bait for fishing.



Figure 1 Fertilized with compost made on site, this allotment is brimming over with life and fabulous produce

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PLANNING

1. Consider the following:

- How much energy do you want to put into this?
- How much room do you have to play with?
- How much garden do you have?
- How much compost can you use?
- How much organic waste can you lay your hands on? e.g.
 - ❖ Kitchen waste – vegetable and fruit peelings, food scraps, cardboard, paper
 - ❖ garden waste – grass clippings, fallen leaves, pruning waste
 - ❖ manure – horse, chicken, bedding.

N.B. These are not complete lists. Click [here](#) for more details



Figure 2 Kitchen Waste ready for the compost

Briefly – if you have no garden, you will need to find places to use your compost.

If you have only a small supply of raw materials you will have to find some.

If you have a small back-yard, you will need to choose a system that does not take up a lot of room.

If you have a huge amount of space, you can really do what you want!

2. There are three main ways of [composting organic waste](#).

- Outside in a pile, buried underground, or in a bin of some sort.
- In a worm farm (vermicomposting)
- Using Bokashi composting (really pickling, not composting)

Each has its advantages and disadvantages. You may like to consider running the three schemes together.

Worm composting is great if you have only a limited amount of room and not a lot of available waste. You can raise your worms for fishing bait, too, if that is one of your interests (vermiculture) and the compost is considered the best quality around.

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Bokashi is fantastic because it handles bones, meat and dairy products which are not easily dealt with in the usual compost set-up. It is an excellent way of composting indoors, but the end product needs to be 'cured' in a second stage process. This can either be done by burying it in an established garden, by adding it to a regular compost, or by adding at least some of it to your worm bin.

Chances are, though, you will choose to do **backyard composting** in the first instance. It costs virtually nothing to set up, it is risk-free and at the end of the day, if you get fed up, you can just spread it around and let nature take its course.

FIRST STEPS

1. Bin or pile? A pile is easy

- It is free
- it is easy to mix and turn the ingredients

Challenges:

- It can become unsightly
- any smells may upset your neighbours
- it is open to the weather
- it can become a haven for rodents and small animals



Figure 3 A backyard compost pile

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Figure 4 Bins in a sheltered, sunny corner

2. A bin has definite advantages.

- It can be free
- It gives protection from the weather
- It can give protection from wild-life
- Any smells are kept under cover
- Your compost is kept under control which should please the neighbours!

Challenges

- It can be costly (we can help you with this)
- The dimensions of some bins make it awkward to turn your ingredients
- Access can be difficult

There are many types of bins, some that rotate, some that cost a king's ransom, some that are made from wood or wire, and some that ring bells. We, however are going down the straight-forward route today and choosing a re-cycled plastic holding bin.

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DOING

To work, composts need 4 essential ingredients.

AIR (oxygen) WATER NITROGEN ('greens') CARBON ('browns')

OK – it's going to be a bin. (The same steps, slightly modified, if necessary, apply to a pile also.)

1. Place your bin (pile)

- In a sunny spot where there is shade at the hottest part of the day. You need warmth, but not blistering heat
- In an area sheltered from rain and wind
- Near an easy source of water
- Near the source of most of your waste (You do not want your bin sited a mile down the garden if you are just going to be composting kitchen waste!)

2. Collect up your waste materials (good idea to start stocking up ahead of time)

- You will need:
- Green materials (e.g. kitchen waste, grass clippings,)
- Brown materials (e.g. dead leaves, saw-dust, wood chips, cardboard)
- Some 'twiggy' materials
- Your hose, ready for action.



Figure 5 Collecting your ingredients

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DOING (CONT)

3. Start adding your ingredients in this order

- First, your twigs and woody materials to aid drainage and aeration
- Then, add a layer of 'green' ingredients, about 3-6 inches deep
- Follow with a layer of 'brown' ingredients – about the same depth as the 'greens'.

As a rough guide ensure that your green and brown ingredients are measured in even amounts by volume.

- Repeat the second two layers until you have used up all your materials
- Wet each layer as you go using the sprinkler attachment on your hose
- Sprinkle a little soil or loam through the mix so as to introduce some of the micro-organisms that you need to get your compost going.

You may not be able to collect a large amount of material to start you off. If that is the case, no worries. Just add whatever you can get when you get it. It will be [a slower process](#), but it will happen.

There you go – you have started to compost. Not too difficult, was it?



Create your own black gold! For more information and top tips on how to build and make the most of your compost, visit <http://clevercomposting.com>

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A FINAL WORD.

Contact us at:

info@clevercomposting.com

<http://clevercomposting.com>

<http://clevercomposting.com/store/>

This really describes only the bare bones of composting, but do remember that nature composts anyway, without the help of man.

We step in and ‘manage’ the process – we make it faster and with some tweaking, often improve the quality of the end result.



So, why not sign up for our monthly News-letter “Just Throw it on the Compost,” for tips, hints and news. We even could throw in the obligatory recipe or two.

“Compost tea, anyone?”

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