

BASIC HOME COMPOSTING

A Review Of Composting Tips For The
Home Gardener

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WHY COMPOST?

- A natural process
- Adds nutrients to soil
- Improves soil structure
- Increases microbiological activity
- Improves garden health
- It's sustainable
- Because it's cool

COMPOSTING INGREDIENTS

- Green matter (nitrogen) 1 part
- Brown matter (carbon) 3 parts
- Water (compost texture of a rung out sponge)
- Heat (90-140 degrees-kills weed seeds-accelerates decomposition process)
- Oxygen (layer or turn under-feeds microbes)
- Microbes-bacteria is the prime player-fungi-worms
- It's just a cooking recipe

WHAT TO COMPOST

- Grass Leaves Fruits
- Vegetative table scraps Egg shells
- Bread Straw Dryer lint
- Coffee Tea Sawdust
- Wood chips Pine needles
- Garden cleanup Hair
- Shredded papers Old soil
- Herbivore manures

WHAT NOT TO COMPOST

- Meats Poultry Eggs
- Limes Omnivore fecal matter
- Fats Oils Bones
- Dairy products
- Diseased and herbicide laden plants
- Toxic materials-Duhhh

TYPES OF COMPOSTING

- Open system
- Closed system
- Compost and manure tea

OPEN SYSTEM

- Put it in a pile, not a totally enclosed structure
- Advantages
 - Simple and cheap
 - Easier to turn over
- Disadvantages
 - Too wet or dry
 - Harder to obtain optimum temperature
 - Pests and varmints
 - Not very yard attractive







OPEN SYSTEM LAYERING

- 4" of brown material on bottom
- 2-3" of green material next
- 1" of soil for microbial activity or add microbial additive
- 4" of brown material
- Continue to repeat
- Add water

CLOSED COMPOST SYSTEM

- Self contained unit
- Tons of designs
- Advantages
 - Easier to control moisture and temperature levels
 - More attractive in yard
- Disadvantages
 - May be too wet
 - Limited size
 - Heavy to turn

TUB COMPOSTER



COMPOST BIN DIAGRAM

COMPOST BIN

- ~ loads from the top
- ~ made with thinner plastic
- ~ minimal aeration
- ~ large volume per footprint
- ~ empties from lower ports
- ~ has no bottom



COMPOST TUMBLER



GREEN MACHINE



COMPOST THERMOMETER



SUN-MAR

microbe mix™

Microbes and Enzymes to initiate and
accelerate composting in:

SUN-MAR Composting Toilets
SUN-MAR Home Composters

Net weight 500g (17.6 oz)

CLEANEST COMPOSTER



SOUR MASH COMPOSTER



COMPOST TEA

- Add 1/3 well decomposed compost or manure to container
- Add water to almost top of container
- Stir a couple times a day
- After a few hours or up to 10 days- strain in cheese cloth
- Use as a root drench or as a foliar spray
- Plants will absorb quicker than solid compost

SUMMARY

- Nitrogen to Carbon ratio- 1 to 3
- Moisture
- Temperature
- Microbiological activity
- Oxygen
- Location-sun/shade
- Smaller material will decompose faster

WHY NOT?

- Just try it
- If you have the greatest compost ever, you'll know it and be proud of it. Show it off to the neighbors
- If it's not fully decomposed and you apply it, it will decompose shortly. If it's not perfect, still use it
- You have nothing to lose except some labor with minimal costs
- And again it's organic and sustainable!

QUESTIONS OR YOUR EXPERIENCES?

- Question-How much wood ashes to put in your compost? I answered 1 cup to 5 Gal of compost. **WRONG!** Add 1 cup to a 4 cubic feet pile of materials. Wood ashes are heavy in alkaline.
- Question-How much compost should you add to a garden? Two to three inches on top and the nutrients will seep down. If you incorporate into the soil, it will absorb into the plants faster. Don't use all compost to plant with. It will not have all the micro-nutrients that may be required, especially minerals. After the meeting a member mentioned to me that many people grow great tomatoes in pure manure. I agree but it's not a complete healthy soil.

QUESTIONS CONTINUED

- Question-Can you use treated wood chips for compost? You can, but personally I would not. Treated lumber is now made with copper, not the nasty arsenic of years ago. Used for a raised bed siding there would be very little leaching but ground into chips, I suspect there would be more.

QUESTIONS CONTINUED

- Question-Are you an expert on composting? While this question wasn't really asked, as Master Gardeners we all know we are generalists, not specialists. I am privileged to share some basic knowledge on composting and improving our precious life-giving soil. Please forgive the weak attempts at humor and crude photos. I appreciate the opportunity given. I am blessed and very proud to be a member of the great group of people who contribute so much in our community and make up the Burke County Master Gardeners Association.
- Randall James