



## Composting Tips

### Where to locate your bin

Bins should be placed in a convenient location in sunny or shaded areas.

### Place your compost bin on pavers or on a solid surface

This will prevent tree and shrub roots from entering your bin as well as making it easier to remove your finished compost.

### Your first time?

Get your compost started quickly by adding a few handfuls of store bought compost such as composted cow manure or get some compost from a friend. Finished compost will have the microbes needed to get your new compost pile cooking!

### Use a large plastic coffee container with lid to collect kitchen waste

If you buy coffee in 2 lb. plastic containers, it's a no cost way to collect and store kitchen scraps until you are ready to add them to your composter. If you are worried about attracting fruit flies, you can store your kitchen scraps in the refrigerator.

### Chop up what you add to your compost bin

Small pieces will decompose faster. Your lawn mower can cut up leaves quickly.

### Not everything is compostable

- Be careful of what you read or hear about what can be composted, including composting clothing. Until research shows this is safe to use around edible plants, it's best not to compost them.
- If the information comes from a University or other reputable sources, then you are good to go.
- Most home composting piles do not get hot enough to destroy pathogenic organisms found in meats, fats, oils, and cat and dog manures. In addition to pathogens, these items can be odiferous and may attract unwanted pests.

### Live in an apartment or condo, or have a small family?

You too can compost. Try vermiculture (worm composting), which is done indoors. Ideal for singles and two person families too!

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### Proportion of “greens” and “browns”

You will need: 1 part wet (“greens”) and 2-3 parts dry (“browns”) depending upon moisture levels of your greens in your compost pile. They can be mixed together or layered.

### Nitrogen- and carbon-rich materials chart

Browns (carbon)	Greens (nitrogen)
Fallen leaves, used potting soil, sawdust, straw, dead plants, woody clippings	Kitchen scraps (vegetables, fruits, tea bags, coffee grounds). Bread, rice, cereal, flour, and grains.
Twigs, chipped branches, wood chips, nut shells	Farm animal manure
Shredded paper, newspaper, cardboard, cardboard rolls, paper coffee filters	Grass clippings, green leaves, garden clippings (not woody clippings)
Paper towels, plates, & napkins	Young green weeds, green plants

Other items that are compostable: crushed egg shells.

### Troubleshooting Compost Problems

Symptom	Problem	Solution
Pile is wet and smells like a mixture of rancid butter, vinegar and rotten eggs	Not enough air Or too much nitrogen Or too wet	Turn the pile.  Mix in dried leaves, shredded paper, or wood chip mulch.  Turn the pile and add dried leaves, shredded paper, sawdust, or wood chip mulch; provide drainage.
Ammonia smell	Too much nitrogen	Mix in dried leaves, shredded paper, or wood chip mulch.
Pile does not heat up or decomposes slowly	Pile is too small Or pile is too dry Or lack of oxygen Or lack of nitrogen Or excess moisture	Make the pile larger.  Add water while turning.  Turn the pile.  Mix in "green" materials.  Open the pile, add shredded paper or dried leaves, and turn
Pile is moist and sweet smelling but will not heat up	Not enough nitrogen	Mix in grass clippings, food scraps or other sources of nitrogen.
Pile is attracting animals	Meat or dairy products have been added Or food scraps are not well covered	Keep meat and dairy products out of the pile; enclose the pile in 1/4" hardware cloth.  Cover food with brown materials such as dried leaves, wood chips or finished compost.

### **Turning (mixing) your pile**

If you are using a small compost bin, use a compost fork, a narrow pitchfork or a compost turner. These are available at hardware stores, garden centers and on-line Or empty the bin onto a tarp, mix, and reload.

### **Closed composters need to be watered**

If you use a tumbler or bin with a top: Check your compost every few weeks. Dig down a few inches below the surface to see if the compost pile is dried out or if it's still moist but not wet. Water and mix (= turn) if needed.

### **Open composters need to be sheltered from rain**

Cover your bin or open pile with a tarp during the rainy season. This is to keep nutrients from your compost from leaching away and rain from making your pile too wet.

### **Bugs in your pile?**

No worries, they are helping to decompose the organic matter you are adding to your compost pile.



**For more information on composting,** please visit this web site

[http://miami-dade.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn\\_and\\_garden/home\\_gardening.shtml](http://miami-dade.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn_and_garden/home_gardening.shtml)

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