

Composting at home

Set up your own compost system by following these easy steps



Step 1. Choose a site

Place your compost heap or bin in a well-drained area that has some shade. Too much sun will dry out your compost.

Step 2. What to compost

- **Green Ingredients:** Compost needs a mixture of nitrogen rich organic materials such as fruit and vegetable peelings, and green garden vegetation such as fresh grass clippings and green leaves.
- **Brown Ingredients:** Nitrogen-poor, carbon rich materials such as dry leaves, woody twigs, paper and straw.
- Water
- Some soil or completed compost to introduce composting micro-organisms

What to add to a compost heap:

- Vegetable and food scraps
- Fallen leaves (in layers)
- Tea leaves and tea bags
- Coffee grounds
- Vacuum cleaner dust
- Soft stems
- Dead flowers
- Old potting mix
- Used vegetable cooking oil
- Egg shells
- Old newspapers (wet)
- Grass cuttings in layers
- Weeds
- Sawdust (not from treated timber)
- Wood ash
- Human and animal hair

What not to add to a compost heap

- Meat and dairy products
- Diseased plants
- Metals, plastic, glass
- Animal manures (especially the droppings of cats and dogs)
- Fat
- Magazines

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- Large branches
- Weeds that have seeds or underground stems
- Bread or cake (may attract mice)
- Bones
- Sawdust from treated timber

Step 3. Layering

Start with a thick layer of coarse material (15cm), like twigs or mulch, this is used for drainage. Then follow with a layered A,B,C system using the materials above:

- A. Garden clippings and kitchen scraps
- B. Dry leaves and paper (wet)
- C. Add water after each layer to keep the heap moist but not wet. Then repeat steps A and B.
- D. Finish by sprinkling soil or finished compost on top of food scraps will make a richer compost and help reduce odour.

Step 4. Maintain your compost

Keep your compost well aerated to prevent foul odour or methane. Turn your compost with a garden fork on a weekly basis. Otherwise place garden stakes or pipes through the heap to allow air in.

Depending on the mix of ingredients, the duration for the compost to turn into a rich soil can be anything from 6 weeks to 6 months.