

The Easy, Organic Way to Richer Soil

Composting is a great way to help the environment and improve your lawn and garden. It's simple: just throw organic scraps into a pile, mix them up, and let them rot in combination with air and water. In as little as 4-6 weeks, you can have an ideal gardening amendment that provides nutrients vital for plant health while improving the quality and structure of your soil.

The Mix

Four basic ingredients are required to strike an effective balance with your compost: water, air, greens, and browns. Greens include nitrogen-rich items like produce peels, coffee grounds, and grass clippings. Browns are carbon-rich material like dead leaves, newsprint, and wood chips. All this material works best when cut into strips or small pieces to speed up decomposition.

There are some things you should never put into your compost, no matter how organic: dairy products, meat scraps, bones, and grease. Most attract pests and simply don't compost well. Check the EPA website for a full list of what not to compost.

Important Pointers

Here are a few tips to help you get the most out of your compost heap:

- Make sure your compost stays damp, but not saturated.
- Compost needs air to speed up decomposition, so either mix it with a pitchfork or turning fork, or layer in bulky materials to create air pockets.
- Include a shovelful of garden soil in your compost pile to introduce the microbes necessary for decomposition.
- If your compost starts to smell, try turning it more often. If that doesn't work, add more "brown" materials, let it dry out, or add a little lime.