

Composting Turns Garbage into Gold

Here are the simple steps

It may take nature decades or centuries to make humus that is crucial for a productive field or forest. You can produce fertile humus in 2 months by composting.

Compost is both the ultimate fertilizer and the ultimate in recycling. You can buy compost, or make it yourself. Compost benefits everything you grow, and saves you the expense of buying chemical fertilizers.



Composting is like making bread. It's creative and satisfying. Simply pile your leaves, grass clippings, weeds, vegetable scraps, eggshells, livestock manure, straw, and other once-living waste. As you build up this heap, water it well. Then stand back! The Transformers swing into action. The Transformers are microscopic organisms, and they magically process organic matter into nature's best fertilizer and soil conditioner. Whether your pile heats up or not, the Transformers will work for you to make humus out of waste.

Remember these three tricks.

1. Water: Most people let their compost heap go too dry. Dry spots look like ash. Dryness means the microbes can't work. So keep your pile as moist as a wrung-out sponge consistently throughout the entire mass.
2. Stir: Your raw ingredients need to be well mixed. Grass clippings left in clumps will become stinky and moldy. So promote good decomposition by fluffing, turning, or forking your compost pile to aerate and blend materials.
3. Start new piles: When your heap is about 3' high x 3' wide x 3' deep, then stop adding new material. Cover it and let this first pile finish its decomposition process, while you build a second pile, following the same steps of watering and mixing ingredients.

Compost will be done in about 8 weeks using this method. You know it's matured and transformed into humus if:

1. It smells as sweet as a forest floor.
2. The color is dark brown to black.
3. The compost temperature is the same as the air temperature.
4. You see no recognizable food scraps, such as banana peels or apple cores. They should be completely decomposed.

Congratulations! You have successfully created the perfect amendment to enrich your soil for lawn, trees, shrubs, perennial and annual flowers, vegetables, and berries. Spread the finished compost 3 inches thick the first year, and ½ inch deep each year thereafter. You've just added "materials and labor." The materials are the minerals in the compost. The labor is the crew of microbial workers. Those tiny workforce members know just how to transform the minerals into forms that your plants find edible. You've provided wise and diverse populations to the food web of your soil, and these microbes do daily alchemy to feed plants. Ahhh! Your plants will love you back with health and vigor.

What are your payoffs? You boost fertility. Compost slowly releases nutrients throughout the whole growing season. You vastly improve your soil's health, texture, aeration, and drainage. Compost makes your soil more spongy and less compact. Since compost holds more moisture in the soil, you are drought-proofing your land. Compost means you spend less time irrigating. Your greenery is healthier and you reap more. More health means you reduce disease and insect problems. The best payoff is that a compost application is non-toxic and mimics Nature's own system.



Get the excellent step by step composting instructions on the DVD called **Backyard Composting in Alaska** –see the Products page (Good Earth Garden Store)