

# ON-SITE COMPOSTING

Composting is the process of decomposing organic material, such as leaves, grass clippings, and kitchen waste into a soil like end-product that provides many essential nutrients for plant growth and therefore, can be used as a natural fertilizer.

Below is some information on how you can start composting. Or, if your outdoor space is limited you can join forces with others and create a communal composting initiative. Alternatively, you could consider vermicomposting indoors instead (see other resource).

## 1- FIND A BIN

Find a large plastic, wood or ceramic bin with a lid from a garden or hardware store (or if you're handy you can build one). The ideal dimensions for the bin are 1mx1mx1m but smaller is fine. You can get creative with a three-bin system or other layout configurations depending on available space. Make holes in the lid and base of the bin to create ventilation and allow liquids to drain. The bin should be in a cool spot that gets plenty of sunlight. Alternatively, you can dig a pit or trench and compost organics in-situ. With a trench you can dig about 30cm deep and compost to create nutrient rich spaces for new plants. If you opt to compost in larger pits it may be preferable if you have a backhoe or other machinery for turning the organic material.

## 2- THROW IN SCRAPS

Compost piles can contain fruits, vegetables, egg shells, paper, tea, coffee and filters, and leaves. Do not add plastic, animal waste, citrus, meat, bones or dairy. Each time you add food scraps to your compost pile, cover it with soaked paper strips, dry leaves or other carbonaceous materials.

## 2- THROW IN SCRAPS

### **What to Put in Your Compost Bin**

- ✓ Fruit and veggie scraps
- ✓ Coffee grounds
- ✓ Loose tea (tea bags are comprised of polypropylene which is a type of plastic and will not decompose properly)
- ✓ Shredded paper (including newspapers but avoid colored and glossy paper)
- ✓ Leaf and yard waste
- ✓ Trimmings from houseplants
- ✓ Pet and human hair
- ✓ Toilet paper rolls and paper egg cartons torn into small pieces
- ✓ Dryer lint
- ✓ Paper towels and napkins (unbleached)

### **What NOT to Put in Your Bin**

- x Meat and seafood (you can compost seafood shells but clean them first)
- x Dairy products
- x Oils
- x Large chunks of anything

### **Compost in moderation**

- Citrus
- Onion
- Garlic
- Avocado

## 3- REPEAT

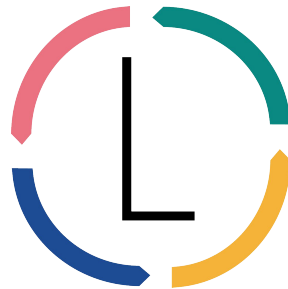
Keep piling food scraps (greens) and carbon rich waste (browns) in your compost bin until it is full. Once the contents have decomposed, you can use the finished compost in your garden or in potted plants. How do you know that the compost is finished? It will look dark and crumbly with a pleasant and earthy smell. The original contents should no longer be recognizable, and the compost pile will have shrunk by at least half its size.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- Keep a small container for food scraps in your kitchen. Add the food scraps to your outdoor bin every few days.
- Have shredded paper or dry leaves available. Every time you add food scraps add in a handful of the shredded paper or leaves. This will keep the bin from getting too wet and ensure ideal carbon-nitrogen ratios are maintained (thought to be around 25 to 30 parts carbon to 1-part nitrogen).
- Turn the contents of your bin often. Turning the contents of your bin warms it up and makes microbes that work to break down the organics very happy. It also mixes the contents, so they don't get too wet or too dry and provides more flow of oxygen. It's ideal to use a shovel or a pitchfork.
- Avoid adding big pieces to the bin. Small organics pieces will break down much faster than big dense chunks. Break apart or chop up food scraps and shred paper, leaves or cardboard before adding to the bin.

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