

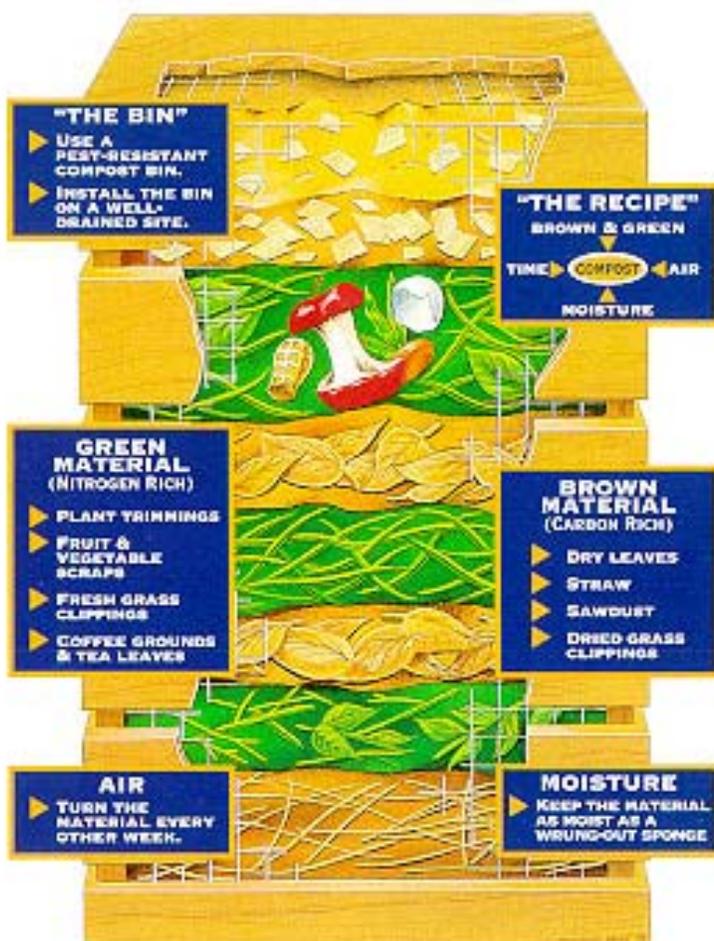
Why Compost?

Composting is the recycling of organic materials back into a useful soil product that can be used in your garden or on potted plants.

Composting can save you money and time and can reduce your garden's watering and weeding needs. It also benefits the environment by recycling valuable organic resources and extending the life of our landfills.

Composting is Easy!

Compost happens no matter what you do! Soil organisms do most of the work for you by decomposing what you put in your compost pile.



1. Start with a shady spot and a good layer of coarse organic material, such as straw, leaves, or pruning scraps at the bottom to allow air to circulate.
2. Add a good layer of nitrogen-rich green material followed by one layer of carbon-rich brown material, until the bin is full. Always cover green with brown.
3. Compost requires air. Turn and stir your compost weekly or every other week so the organisms get the necessary oxygen for the decomposition process.
4. Compost requires moisture. Water your compost bin as needed, more often during hot summer months, to ensure it stays moist. It should be like a wrung-out sponge, damp but not soggy.
5. Give it time – Your organic waste can be composted in as little as two weeks or it

could take up to a year depending on the attention you devote to it. Compost is "mature" or ready when it appears uniformly dark, crumbly, and has a sweet earthy smell. If your goal is fast compost, follow the percentages listed below. Chipping or chopping the material will increase the speed of the process. Regular aeration is as big a key to successful composting as a good

mix of materials. If you just want to deal with your yard/kitchen wastes in an easy, low maintenance way, don't worry about proportions. With the first four steps in mind, everyone can make excellent compost.

35% Green (Nitrogen rich) Material. This includes plant trimmings, fruit and vegetable peels, fresh grass clippings, coffee grounds, egg shells and tea leaves. **NO grease, meat, or bones.**

50% Brown (Carbon rich) Material. This includes dry leaves, straw, sawdust, hay, and shredded paper.

15% Soil or Mature Compost. This is used as a source of necessary soil organisms and a cap to reduce evaporation of water and nitrogen.

Tip – An occasional sprinkling of wood ashes, limestone, or crushed shells helps neutralize acidity and will aid in reducing odors.

A great source of information on gardening and composting is the Ventura County Master Gardener Helpline. Get free gardening and composting advice Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 1 – 4 p.m. Call 805-645-1455 with all your questions

Do I need a bin?

No, you don't need a bin. You can compost in an open pile, or build your own bin out of scrap lumber, old pallets, or concrete blocks.

You may prefer to purchase a ready-made bin for neatness and ease of use. Bins with lids reduce odor and pest problems and are best for City neighborhoods. Plastic, wire, wooden, and worm bins are available and work very well.

Residents of apartments and condominiums can compost too! Covered bucket systems and worm bins work best for small spaces.

When is the compost ready?

Ideal conditions of the proper bin system, good layering of greens and browns, the correct amount of moisture, adequate mixing, and high temperatures can produce compost in less than one month. However, it usually requires several months for good compost to be produced. Your compost is ready to use when it is brown, uniform in consistency, crumbly, and has a sweet earthy smell. You may want to sift your compost through a screen before use.

How do I use my compost?

Mix finished compost with garden soil and use it as mulch on top of the soil, dig it into the soil, or use as a potting mix for plants in containers.