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Backyard Composting

Recycle your household and garden waste



My name is Stefan Knudsen. I live in Mint Hill with my wife and kids. I am a small business owner and master composter. My wife Suzanne is an environmental biologist and a Certified Habitat Steward.

We both love the outdoors and gardening

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What is composting?

Composting is the natural breakdown of organic materials. The end product, compost, is the rich organic matter that is made as microorganisms decompose yard and kitchen wastes.

In your home, organic materials that can be recycled into compost include kitchen scraps, leaves or grass clippings.



Why compost?

It's earth-friendly: Food scraps and yard waste make up at least 20-30% of the waste stream. Making compost keeps these materials out of landfills, where they take up precious space and release methane gas.

It benefits your yard: Compost improves soil structure and texture, increases the soil's ability to hold both water and air, improves soil fertility, and stimulates healthy root development in plants.

It's easy: You can start with just leaves and grass, then work your way towards composting your food scraps.

It saves money: Adding compost to your garden can reduce or eliminate the need to buy chemical fertilizers or compost. If you pay for the amount of trash hauled, composting can also cut down on your trash costs.

What do I need to make compost

- **4 basic ingredients**
 - **Brown (Carbon):** Dry leaves, chopped or shredded branches, shredded paper, straw or hay, saw dust, wooden pellets.
 - **Green (Nitrogen):** Kitchen scraps, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, grass clippings* in small amounts, fresh hay.
 - **Water (H₂O)**
 - **Air (Oxygen)**





To make compost it is preferred to have a bin or tumbler to contain your organic matter.

1. Home made compost bin
2. Simple round compost bin
3. Compost tumbler

Making compost

1. Choose a location that is convenient, shaded and well-drained. Make sure you have access to water in case the compost dries out. Use a compost bin or tumbler: it keeps the material in a confined area, retains heat and moisture, deters pests and reduces the effects of wind and rain.
2. Add your materials in a balanced mixture of carbon and nitrogen. A mixture of about 75 percent carbon material with 25 percent nitrogen material, along with water, oxygen, heat and composting organisms, makes compost happen.
3. Maintain your compost bin or tumbler. The key steps in maintenance are turning your material and keeping it moist.
 - Use a pitchfork for a bin or if you use a tumbler simply give it a spin.
 - Water the material if it becomes dry. It should feel like a wrung out sponge

Relax, composting is easy!

What NOT to put in your compost

- Cat and dog manure, which may contain disease organisms
- Charcoal ashes, which may contain toxic compounds
- Herbicide or pesticide treated plants
- Meats, grease, bones, dairy products or cooking oil; these may attract rodents or other pests
- Pine needles or magnolia leaves, which take a long time to break down
- Sick or diseased plants
- Treated wood
- Weed plants or seeds

The above materials can attract pests, generate foul odors, or contaminate the compost.



Using your Compost

Mulch: spread 1-3 inches around plants and bare soil to prevent erosion, control weed growth, and conserve water.

Soil Amendment: work 2-3 inches of compost into the top six inches of soil each time you start a new garden or plant trees or shrubs.

Potting Mix: sift compost through a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch screen and mix two parts commercial top soil with one part compost.



Other ways to recycle your household waste

- Worm composting can be done indoors or outdoors.
- Kids love it and gets them interested in recycling.
- Worms are the best pets and you can have thousands of them.

Helpful information

- Take the Mecklenburg county 2 hour compost class. Only \$10.00. To register call 704 336 4304 or go to <http://charmeck.org/mecklenburg/county/SolidWaste/homecomposting/Pages/CompostWorkshops.aspx>
- N.C Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance at www.p2pays.org/compost/
- Buy composters www.compostingmatter.com. 10% discount with coupon code “mecklenburg”.



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Thank You For Your Time