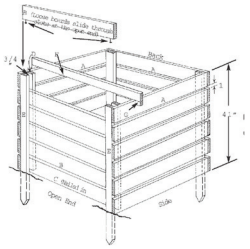
Compost Bins

While there are many types of compost bins available commercially, compost bins can be made inexpensively from simple items.

One Unit Wood Bin

Wood bins with removable slats are practical and attractive. Directions for making one, two, or three bin wood composters can be found on-line. These sturdy structures last for years.

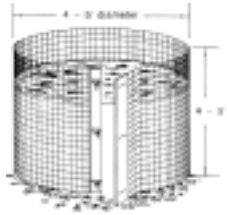


Garbage Can Bin

A garbage can can be converted into a compost bin simply by drilling holes in the side and bottom to allow it to drain. The cover can prevent unwanted animals from entering the bin.

Wire Mesh Bin

The wire mesh can be bent into a circle and tied off at the ends to form a compost bin.



Commercial compost bins can be found at various home and garden retailers or from composting stores found online.

Advanced Composting

Master Composter Program

The UConn Home & Garden Education Center offers a Master Composter program every year. Check out www.ladybug.uconn.edu or email ladybug@uconn.edu for more information.

Vermicomposting

Worms can be used to compost indoors, which is useful during the cold months of winter. Red wrigglers are placed in a box with a bedding of shredded paper or cardboard and given nonfatty food scraps to break down.

Compost Tea

Compost tea is formed by steeping compost in water. After fi ltering out the solids, compost tea is a nutrient rich liquid fertilizer for plants.

UConn Home & Garden Center Website:
www.homegarden.cahnr.uconn.edu

Fact sheets on compost and other horticultural topics can be found at the Center's website and also at the UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory's website: www.soiltesting.cahnr.uconn.edu

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Come On! Compost

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EDUCATION CENTER

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Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture

What is Composting?

Composting is natural version of recycling. Just as a recycled can is turned back into aluminum so it can be made into a new can, recycled plant parts and/or animal manures are turned back into a soil-like substance that can be used to amend garden soils.

Compost itself is a complex mix of decaying organic matter that serves as a home and food source for living organisms like worms, bacteria, and fungi. Good compost will also be sufficiently moist and well aerated to encourage these organisms.

A **mature compost** will have a dark color and feel light and fluffy. It will also smell and look like good garden soil. Compost is mature when the original materials are mostly unrecognizable.

Passive composting involves just allowing the organic materials to decompose in place at their natural rate. It is a rather effortless process that takes about 8–12 months.

Active composting requires the turning of a 3 to 4 foot high and wide compost pile with the proper balance of 'green' and 'brown' materials. The pile would be monitored for moisture and oxygen. Active composting produces a finished product quicker than passive composting.

Why Compost?

Composting is a simple and inexpensive way of disposing of most plant scraps, including grass clippings, food scraps, leaves and garden debris as well as some paper products.

The finished product is a good soil amendment that is high in organic matter and sometimes, nutrients. It will help retain water and nutrients as well as maintain the soil pH.

Composting can greatly reduce the carbon footprint associated with organic waste disposal. Carbon from landfilled wastes may decompose into methane, a greenhouse gas twenty times more potent than carbon dioxide. Composting helps prevent methane formation and even locks much of the carbon into the soil.

Good for Composting:

- Any fruit or vegetable scraps
- Egg shells
- Coffee grounds and filters
- Tea bags
- Newspapers (not glossy sections) and paper towels
- Yard waste (grass, leaves, untreated wood, etc.)

Bad for Composting:

- Meat, fish, bones, and pet wastes
- Dairy products
- Diseased plants
- Plants treated with pesticides
- Fats and oils
- Wood and charcoal ash

How to Compost?

1. Choose an area that can accommodate a 3 or 4 cubic foot compost pile and is out of direct sunlight. Make sure that the pile is not in contact with your house or other structures.
2. Start with an 8″–12″ layer of browns (leaves, shredded newspaper, wood chips, chopped corn stalks, hay, etc). Water it until it is moist, but not wet.
3. Add a 2″–4″ layer of greens (fresh grass clippings, kitchen scraps, coffee grounds, manure, etc) and moisten if necessary.
4. Add a shovelfull or a thin (¼″) layer of garden soil or compost.
5. Repeat steps 2–4 until the pile is between three and five feet tall.
6. If you are doing active composting, turn the pile every two weeks. Move the inner material to the outside. If the pile seems too dry, moisten it. If it seems too wet, add dry material while turning.