

Uses for Compost

As a Soil Amendment



Mix two to five inches of compost into vegetable and flower gardens each year before planting.

As a Potting Mixture

Add one part compost to two parts commercial potting soil, or make your own mixture by using equal parts of compost and sand or perlite.



As a Mulch



Spread an inch or two of compost around flowers and vegetables, and up to six inches around trees and shrubs.

As a Top Dressing

Mix finely sifted compost with sand and sprinkle evenly over lawns.



Other Composting Methods

Worm Composting

Composting with worms is a simple, efficient, and fun way to recycle most food scraps. This system works well for apartment-dwellers and others who produce little or no yard trimmings.

Grass-cycling and Mulching

Grass-cycling and mulching are two ways to practice bay friendly yard care. Both processes involve applying yard trimmings, such as lawn clippings, leaves, straw, sawdust, wood chips, or compost to existing landscaping to provide nutrients and conserve moisture.



For more information visit www.RecycleMore.com/content/composting-home

Discount Compost Bins

Compost bins are available for WEST CONTRA COSTA RESIDENTS at a discounted rate. Call **510-215-3125** for more information.

The West Contra Costa Home Composting Program is sponsored by the West Contra Costa Integrated Waste Management Authority, representing the cities of El Cerrito, Hercules, Pinole, Richmond, and San Pablo.



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WEST CONTRA COSTA INTEGRATED
WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

One Alvarado Square • San Pablo, CA 94806
Tel: 510.215.3125 • 510.236.1636



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Composting at Home

— it's only natural!



Composting is nature's way of recycling.

Composting

- Saves money by lowering garbage bills and replacing store-bought soil conditioners.
- Improves fertility and condition of soil which creates healthier gardens for your family and the environment.
- Saves water by helping the soil hold moisture and reducing water runoff.



What to Compost

Browns = Carbon-rich dry, woody materials (dried leaves, pine needles, newspaper or brown paper bag can substitute)

Greens = Nitrogen-rich, moist, green materials, food scraps

Getting Started

Compost Bin

There are many types of composting bins available. Bins can be purchased at local hardware stores and are also available to West Contra Costa residents at a discounted rate. For more information call **(510) 215-3125**.

Making your own compost bin? Call **(510) 215-3125** for more information.

Bin Placement

The compost bin should be placed at least four feet from your home, and should not be placed in direct sunlight.

Tools

Before getting started, you'll need to make sure that you have a pitch fork (or shovel) to turn the material and a watering can or hose nearby to wet the material.



Basic Maintenance

Composting is as Easy as 1-2-3:



1. CHOP materials to help them break down quickly. The more surface area that is exposed, the faster the processing.



2. MIX browns and greens. The balance should be approximately 50/50 by volume. Always maintain a layer of browns on the top and bottom of the pile to contain odors and reduce pests.

3. MAINTAIN air and water balance by keeping compost as moist as a wrung-out sponge and turning the material with a pitch fork. If you provide a balance of "browns" and "greens" and provide sufficient air flow and water, your compost pile will begin to decompose. The process can take between one and six months depending on how small the pieces are chopped and how often the pile is turned. You'll know the compost is ready when it looks like potting soil.



Compost Science Bacteria and other microorganisms start the process of decaying organic matter. Fungi and protozoa soon join the bacteria and somewhat later in the cycle, centipedes, millipedes, beetles, and earthworms complete the composting process.



Compost Troubleshooting

SYMPTOM	PROBLEM	SOLUTION
Pile not composting	Too dry Not enough "greens" Not enough heat Too small	Moisten slightly and evenly Mix in "greens" such as grass clippings Cover pile and/or insulate sides Add materials
Pile smells bad	Too wet/needs air	Add dry materials such as brown leaves or sawdust; mix; uncover pile to dry it out a bit
Pests in pile	Meat, fat, or oils in pile	Remove meat and fatty scraps from pile; use animal-proof bin

GREENS

YES:

- Fruit & vegetable trimmings
- Lawn clippings & yard trimmings
- Coffee grounds, filters & tea bags
- Herbivore manure
- Fallen leaves
- Pine needles
- Twigs & small branches

BROWNS

NO:

- Meats, bones, or fish
- Dairy products or grease
- Large amounts of grains, beans, or bread
- Dog, cat, or bird feces
- Diseased plants
- Candy
- Chemically-treated plants