

RESOURCES

WORKSHOPS & PRESENTATIONS

The UCCE Master Gardeners of Orange County offer practical composting demonstrations and presentations. Please check on our web site at <http://uccemg.com> for more information, or call the Master Gardener Office at 714-708-1647.

BOOKS, BROCHURES & WEB SITES

“Let it Rot! : The Gardener’s Guide to Composting”

Stu Campbell

Available for purchase at booksellers or check out from an OC Public Library

“Compost in a Hurry” UC ANR Publication #8037

<http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu>

Free downloadable publication that explains the “UC Rapid Method” in detail.



Cornell Composting Web Site

compost.css.cornell.edu/Composting_homepage.html

COMPOST BIN PLANS

“Building Your Own Composting Bin”

<http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Publications/Organics/44295054.pdf>

FOR COMPOST QUESTIONS

Call UCCE Master Gardeners of Orange County

Hotline at 714-708-1646

or E-mail hotline@uccemg.com

University of California Cooperative Extension

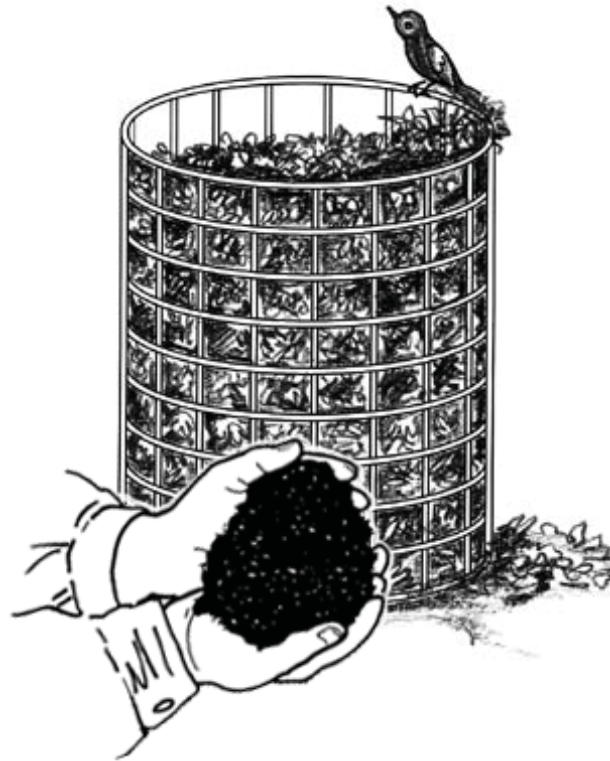


Orange County
1045 Arlington Avenue
Costa Mesa, California
92626
714-708-1606



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IT'S EASY TO MAKE COMPOST!



WHAT IS COMPOST ?

Compost is remains of decomposed organic matter, like grass, leaves, small twigs and branches, fruit and vegetables scraps, coffee grounds and much more. It is dark and crumbly and has a pleasant earthy smell. It is nature’s way of recycling!

WHY COMPOST ?

TO IMPROVE YOUR SOIL AND PLANT HEALTH

Any type of soil benefits from compost. It aerates and loosens clay soil and helps to retain water in sandy soils. Compost has nutrients that improve soil fertility and help your plants grow strong and healthy.



SAVE WATER

Compost increases water retention in your soil so that you won’t have to water as often. Also, when compost is used as a mulch on top of soil, it reduces run-off. Good for the environment; good for your water bill!



SAVE MONEY

No need to use gas going to the store to buy bagged soil conditioners. Make compost right in your own back yard; ready to use - for free!



REDUCE YARD MATERIALS SENT TO CROWDED LANDFILLS



Instead of sending your yard trimmings and grass clippings off to the landfill every week, you can turn these recyclable organic materials into rich compost for use in your garden.

WHERE TO COMPOST

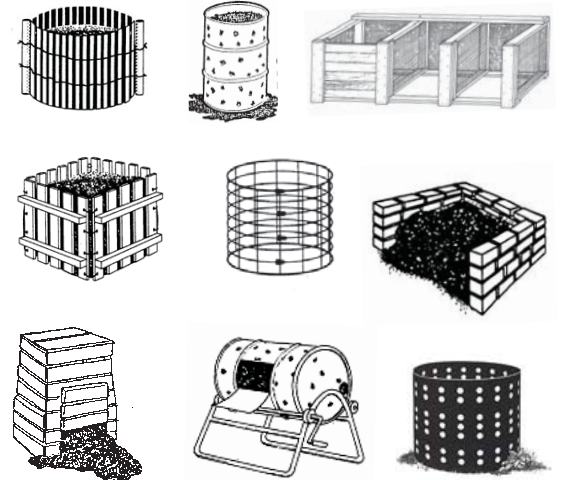
You don’t need a lot of space to compost. You just need an area that is about 3 feet by 3 feet by 3 feet. Locate your pile in partial shade, so that it does not dry out the composting materials too quickly. Leave some room around the pile so that you will have an area to turn your compost easily.

COMPOSTING SYSTEMS

BINS

Compost bins help keep the materials contained during the process. They also deter pests from digging in your pile and help it to retain heat and moisture.

You can make a bin at home or purchase a commercial one.



There are many different choices of bins, some of which are shown above. Homemade bins are easily constructed from wood, wire mesh, cinder blocks, pallets, or other commonly discarded materials. See our “Resources” page for references on bin construction.

Bins that can be purchased at many nurseries and on-line, including rotating drums, plastic tiered bins, and plastic mesh cylinders.

COMPOSTING BASICS

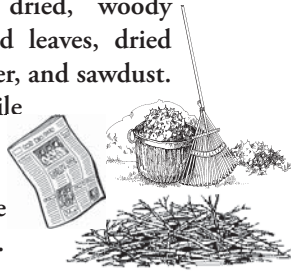
THE BASIC FOUR

The basic recipe for making finished compost is to combine four basic ingredients: **GREENS**, **BROWNS**, **WATER**, and **AIR**. Mix all ingredients together and let it “cook” allowing nature’s helpers (microbes and insects) to assist. In as little as 3 months you could have nutrient- rich compost for use in your garden! It’s that simple!

GREENS include grass clippings, green leaves, fresh shrub and tree prunings, fruit and vegetable scraps and yes, tea bags and coffee grounds! But don’t add any meat or dairy products to your pile!



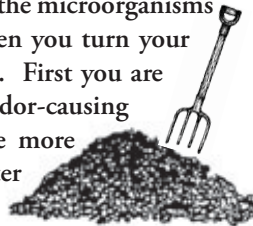
BROWNS include dried, woody materials such as dead leaves, dried twigs or branches, paper, and sawdust. They work best in a pile when shredded or chopped. They help allow air to get to the pile through their bulk.



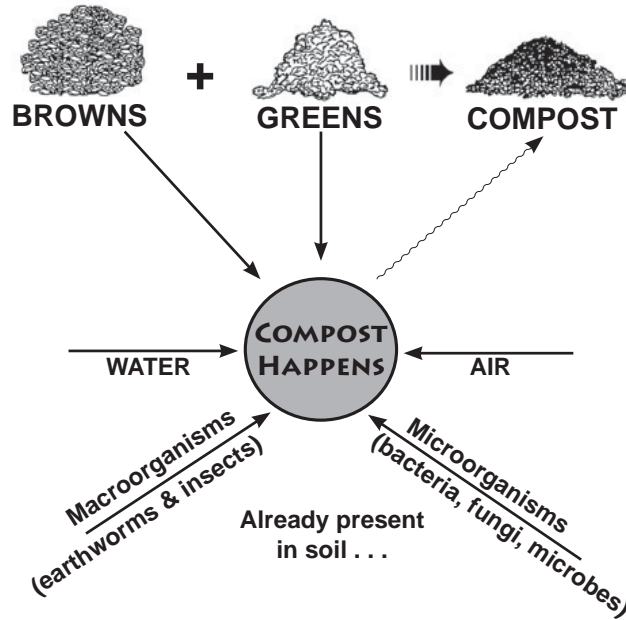
WATER is necessary to create an environment that is favorable to the microorganisms that break down organic materials. Keep your compost pile as moist as a wrung out sponge. Too much water will cause your compost pile to smell, but too little will not allow for composting action to take place.



AIR is a must to keep your pile sweet-smelling as well as being necessary for the microorganisms to live and multiply. When you turn your pile there are two benefits. First you are inhibiting the growth of odor-causing bacteria, and second, the more you turn your pile, the faster finished compost is made!



COMPOST HAPPENS!



WHAT GOES IN THE COMPOST PILE ?

50% GREENS

Fresh grass clippings, yard trimmings, green leaves, horse, cow, chicken or rabbit manure, fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags.

50% BROWNS

Dried leaves, woody plant material, chopped/ground up branches & twigs, straw, hay, shredded newspaper or cardboard, and sawdust.

WHAT STAYS OUT OF THE COMPOST PILE?

- Meat, fish, poultry and bones.
- Dairy products, grease & lard.
- Weed seeds, Bermuda grass, or nut sedge!
- Dog & cat manure
- Charcoal or Durafume ashes
- Treated wood products

"WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT!"

TRADITIONAL METHOD

This time-honored method involves making a pile of organic materials and letting them stand for a year, after which there will be finished compost. This slower composting works for people who: lack the ingredients to make a full pile & lack the time or ability to turn the compost pile frequently. Build the pile by alternating green and brown materials as they become available! It is less labor intensive, and still makes a batch of compost in one year.



HARVESTING & USING YOUR FINISHED COMPOST

"WHEN IS MY COMPOST IS READY ?"

Smell and feel the contents of your compost pile. It should have a pleasant earthy aroma and be of a dark brown color with a crumbly texture. You should not be able to recognize any of the materials originally placed in the bin. There may be a few large chunks of woody material left. These can be screened out and placed in your next batch for further decomposition.

USING YOUR FINISHED COMPOST

Incorporating compost into soil is a common way compost is used. Compost will help to improve the texture and water retention of Orange County soils which tend to be mostly clay or sandy by the coast. Spread 2 - 4 inches of compost over the soil and mix with the soil to a depth of approximately 6 inches.

U.C. RAPID METHOD

UCCE recommends using the Rapid Method to produce compost by following these easy, but essential steps:

1. Chop “Browns” to a small size to provide greater surface area for decomposition. The more you chop “Browns”, the faster decomposition will occur. “Greens”, being naturally soft-tissued do not need as much chopping.
2. Greens and Browns must be of an equal volume.
3. Composting works best if the moisture content of materials in the pile feels like a wrung out sponge. (Too much moisture results in a soggy smelly mess; while too dry means decomposition will not occur as fast.)
4. Heat, very important in rapid composting, is supplied by naturally occurring microorganisms as they break down the organic materials. A pile size of at least 3’ X 3’ X 3’ is recommended to minimize heat loss and to reach the temperature needed to kill all seeds and pathogens.
5. Turn the compost every few days. The more frequently you turn it, the quicker finished compost will be produced.

The “UC Rapid Method” requires extra physical effort on the part of the composter but for those who want large amounts of compost, or for those who wish to convert materials which are usually wasted into usable compost, the effort is worthwhile.

TROUBLESHOOTING

?	CAUSE	SOLUTION
Ammonia smell	Too many “greens”	Add more “browns”; mix and turn.
Pile has a rotten odor	1. Too wet 2. Pile compacted 3. Food scraps exposed	1. Mix in brown material. 2. Turn pile to aerate. 3. Bury food scraps in middle of pile.
Pile doesn't heat up - low Temp.	1. Not enough “Greens” 2. Not enough Air 3. Lack of Moisture 4. Pile too small	1. Mix in “greens” 2. Turn pile more frequently. 3. Add small amounts of water. 4. Build pile to be > 1 cubic yard.
Pile attracting flies, or rodents	Attracted by food remains	Don't use meats or fat, bury fruit or vegetable scraps.