

COMPOSTING IS EASY!

Composting makes sense – and it can save you money! Here's how:

- By composting your yard debris, you can reduce the amount of garbage you produce, thereby saving money.
- You can avoid the trouble and cost of buying soil amendments like peat moss, bark mulch and bagged manure.
- Using compost in gardens and flower beds makes digging easier and holds moisture and fertilizers where plants can use them.
- Compost helps keep your plants healthy, so you spend less time worrying about the garden and more time enjoying it.

USING YOUR COMPOST

Compost keeps plants and soils healthy. Compost is not a substitute for fertilizer, but contains a variety of nutrients & minerals needed for healthy plant growth. Compost can be used as a *mulch* or a *soil enricher*.

Mulch: Spread compost around annual plantings, trees, shrubs and exposed slopes. This will smother weeds, protect soil and keep roots moist.

Soil Enricher: Mix several inches of compost into garden beds or soil surrounding new trees and shrubs, or rake lightly into lawns.

For more information about composting in Whatcom County, contact any of the following organizations:



WSU Whatcom County Extension Master Recyclers/Composters Program

(360) 676-6736

whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/compost

e-mail: whatcom.compost@wsu.edu

Whatcom County Recycling Hotline

(360) 676-5723



Whatcom County Public Works

(360) 676-7695

www.whatcomcounty.us/publicworks/solidwaste

EASY COMPOSTING

What You Can and
Can't Compost

...

Two Compost Recipes

...

Compost
Troubleshooting

...

How to Use Compost



Whatcom County
Public Works
Solid Waste Division

WHAT YOU CAN COMPOST

TWO EASY COMPOST RECIPES

DO COMPOST

Grass clippings
Leaves
Flowers
Tea/coffee grounds
Weeds (non-noxious)
Twigs
Chopped prunings
Vegetable scraps
Fruit peelings and cores
Egg and nut shells
Sawdust
Straw and hay
Wood chips

DO NOT COMPOST

Dairy products
Meat scraps
Animal fats
Bones
Dog and cat feces
Diseased plants or fruits
Insect ridden plants
Vegetable oils
Unchopped woody waste
Synthetic fibers
Plastics
Invasive weeds (buttercup, quackgrass, morning glory)



SYMPTOMS PROBLEMS SOLUTIONS

Compost has a bad odor.	Not enough air; pile too wet.	Turn it; add coarse dry stalks, straw, or wood chips.
Pile is dry throughout.	Not enough water; too much woody material.	Turn pile and moisten; cover pile; add fresh green material.
Pile is damp but woody and not composting.	Lack of nitrogen.	Turn it and mix in a nitrogen source like fresh grass clippings or coffee grounds.

The bugs, fungi, bacteria and worms in your yard make composting easy. Just mix grass clippings, leaves, flowers and other yard debris into a freestanding pile or compost bin, and the compost critters will eat away until you have finished compost.

Yard debris composted in this way may take a year or two to break down fully. To speed up this process, there are many ways to prepare yard debris so that it is easier for compost critters to eat. Here are two simple recipes to get you started. Choose the recipe which suits the time and effort you want to spend.

No-Fuss Compost

Ready in 12–18 months.

A fine, slow-cooked compost can be made by simply adding layers of available fresh yard debris to a freestanding pile or bin over a period of several months or years.

Ingredients:

- Mixed fresh yard debris
- Rainwater

Directions:

1. Set compost pile or bin where it is sure to get rained on, but not on soggy ground or near a stream or pond.
2. Add yard debris to your pile or bin as it is collected from the yard.

In one year to 18 months, the material at the bottom and center of the pile should be composted. Use the uncomposted materials to start a new batch.

HINTS FOR MAKING MORE COMPOST

Use a portable bin as a mold to make more piles. Simply remove the bin from around the pile and set it up in another spot to start a new pile. The old pile will remain mounded while it composts. Free plans for building your own compost bin are available by calling the Recycling Hotline at (360)676-5723 or the WSU Whatcom County Extension at (360)676-6736.

Some-Fuss Compost

Ready in six months.

With a little more work you can make compost faster.

Ingredients:

- Mixed fresh green and brown yard debris
- Rainwater and additional water if needed

Directions:

1. Put yard debris in a pile or bin as it is picked up from the yard. Moisten dry materials as they are added. Chop up large, tough materials using a machete, flat-edge spade, or a yard debris chipper.
2. Cover top of pile with weighted tarp or old plywood.
3. Dig into the pile monthly. If the middle of the pile is dry, turn and moisten materials. If the pile is woody and not decomposing, mix in fresh grass clippings or nitrogen fertilizer.

In six months, the bottom and center of the pile should be ready to harvest. Use the uncomposted materials to start a new batch.

HARVESTING YOUR COMPOST

It's easy to harvest finished compost for your plants. Use a garden fork to move fresh yard debris from the top of the pile until you reach the dark, soil-like compost underneath. Use the fresh debris to start your next pile.