When is it compost?

If a pile is turned every two days, complete compost can be achieved in about 1 month (if materials are shredded).

Turning a pile monthly will produce compost in about 6 months.

Using a 1/2" mesh screen, filter composted materials. Apply this filtered material to your plants. Place the remaining materials back in your compost pile to complete the composting process.

Application

Flower and Vegetable Beds
Apply 1/2 to 1" of compost over the entire bed or place in rings around each plant extended to their drip line.

Keep compost 1-2" inches from the base of plants and trees to avoid damage by pests that might feed on the covered bark.

Lawn Establishment
Apply 1/2-1" of compost and incorporate it into top 6 inches of soil.

Chipped Yard Waste

Each year in Yakima County about 17,000 tons of recyclable yard waste is disposed of in the landfill. The landfill takes the branches, lawn clippings and yard waste and runs them through a grinder to create chipped yard waste material. This material is available for purchase by Yakima County residents and businesses for $2.00 per ton.

The chipped yard waste can then be taken home and quickly run through the composting process.

Compost Demonstration Garden

Located within the Yakima Area Arboretum in Yakima, WA, is a **Compost Demonstration Garden** supported by Yakima County Public Services, Solid Waste Division. This garden contains various types of compost bins and provides hands-on information about composting. Please visit this garden to learn more about composting and some of the bins currently available in the marketplace.

Composting Questions?

If this brochure did not answer a question you may have about composting, please contact the Solid Waste Division office at (509) 574-2450.

Making Compost - It's easy!

Yakima County Public Services

Solid Waste Division

7151 Roza Hill Drive
Yakima, WA 98901
(509) 574-2450
Fax (509) 574-2458

www.co.yakima.wa.us/publicservices/solidwaste.htm

What is Compost?

A mixture of decaying organic matter, (grass clippings, leaves, branches, and manure), used to improve soil structure and provide nutrients to plants.

Why Compost?

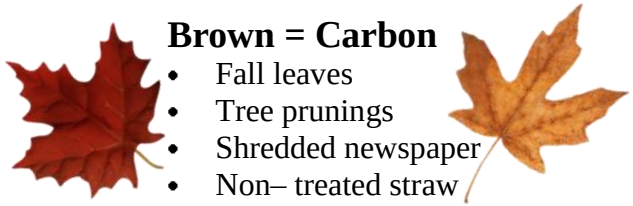
Compost contains valuable nutrients that could replace or supplement use of commercial fertilizers by homeowners.

Composting is the most efficient way to divert organic wastes from our county's solid waste stream.

The Basics

When mixing by volume the ratio is:

2 parts brown: 1 part green



Brown = Carbon

- Fall leaves
- Tree prunings
- Shredded newspaper
- Non– treated straw
- Saw dust (small quantities)

Green = Nitrogen

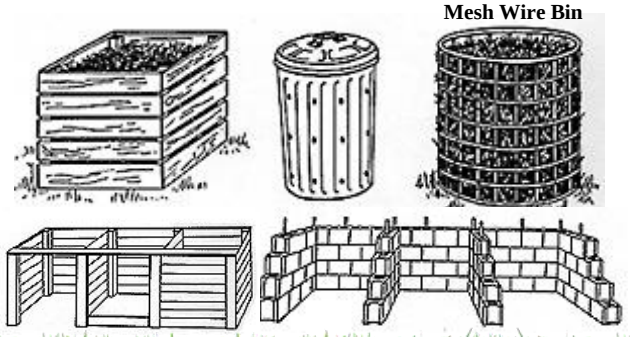
- Grass clippings
- Coffee grounds
- Fruit & vegetable scraps
- Manure

Getting Started

1. Location - Select a location that is convenient and has easy access to water.
2. Purchase or build your compost bin.
3. Mix your "browns and greens." *Smallest recommended pile size: 3'x3'x3'.*
4. Wet your compost. Keep your pile as moist as a wrung-out sponge.
5. Turn your pile. Frequently turning your pile, aids in the breakdown of organic matter. The less often you turn, the longer the composting process will take.

The Compost Bin

There are many different compost bins on the market. If you are new to composting, the simpler, less expensive mesh wiring system is most practical. As you get more compost savvy, you may consider experimenting with another type. For instructions on how to create the mesh wire bin, contact your Solid Waste Division at (509) 574-2450.



Mesh Wire Bin

Temperature

A temperature of 150 degrees is needed for killing many of the pathogenic diseases and weeds seeds. Compost thermometers are available to test the temperature of a pile.

Failure to reach this temperature may be caused by too much water, improper aeration, too little nitrogen, or too small of pile.

What NOT to Compost

- Pig and pet manure
- Meat scraps
- Vegetation treated with fungicides
- Fats & oils
- Diseased plants
- Perennial weeds (i.e. morning glory, quack grass, & other hard to kill weeds).

Common Problems & Solutions

Nothing is happening…

Is your pile dry? Add water.
Does the pile have too much bulking agent? Add more nitrogen.

The pile stinks…

It needs more air and less water.
Try turning the pile more often or adding more bulking agents.