

## WHY COMPOST?

Composting is a naturally occurring process that is the ultimate in recycling. Nature recycles leaves, animal manure, and other animal products through naturally occurring bacteria.

Compost protects plants from diseases, insects, and pests while enhancing the soil's ability to retain water and air which are both essential to plant health and growth.

Unlike soluble chemical fertilizers, compost releases its nutrients slowly as plants need them.

Importantly, 68% of the two hundred million tons of mixed residential garbage produced in the U.S. each year consists of organic material such as yard, food, paper, and wood wastes that could just as easily have been composted rather than landfilled!

## What are the facts?

- Many recyclable materials are still thrown away:
  - 73% of glass containers
  - 77% of magazines
  - 66% of plastic bottles
  - 45% of newspapers
- The national recycling rate is over 30%. The EPA has set a goal of 35%.
- Recycling saves 11 times the amount of energy generated by methane recovery at a landfill.

©HarvardUniversity—<http://www.uos.harvard.edu/fmo/recycling/myths.shtml>

**This brochure is truly a community effort that offers numerous opportunities for community-wide participation.**

When you are done with this brochure . . .



Please recycle it to a friend.

**CONCERNED CITIZENS OF SENECA COUNTY**

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# DECAY'S THE WAY

OR

*"The How and  
Why of  
BACKYARD  
COMPOSTING"*



## STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

### STEP 1: SELECT A SITE

Locate a site that is out of the way yet convenient to get to. Make sure it is:

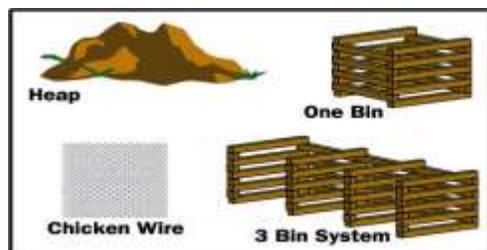
- At least 2 feet from any structure so that the wind will provide good air circulation.
- Open on the bottom so the microorganisms and worms are able to get to the pile.
- In an area that has good drainage so that water doesn't accumulate around the pile.

You may also want to check local zoning ordinances for possible requirements as well.

### STEP 2: SELECT A STRUCTURE

A compost structure can be built or purchased. It comes in many shapes and sizes. The one you choose will depend on the amount of work you are willing to put into maintaining it and the expense of building or buying one.

Compost structures range from a pile on the ground to a commercial compost bin. They can be made from concrete blocks, wooden pallets, garbage cans or chicken wire. Compost structures can have single or multiple compartments.



### STEP 3: ADD MATERIALS

All organic material can be composted as described by the three following subheadings:

#### KITCHEN SCRAPS

- Coffee Grounds
- Egg Shells
- Food Scraps Except Meat and Dairy Products
- Forgotten rotting fruits and vegetables at the back of your refrigerator
- Tea Bags
- Vegetable and Fruit Peels
- 

#### YARD WASTES

- Agricultural and Animal Manures
- Dead Flowers and Plants
- Grass Clippings
- Leaves
- Shrub, Hedge, and Plant Prunings
- Weeds
- Woody Trimmings
- Yard Trimmings

#### HOUSEHOLD WASTES

- Most ashes except coal ash and charcoal
- Household plant trimmings
- Pet or human hair
- Sawdust and wood shavings except pressure treated
- Shredded black and white newspapers (No colored paper, magazines, or catalogs unless printed with soy ink)
- Wilted cut flowers except if treated with pesticides



### STEP 4: MAINTENANCE

- Add new layers of composting material to the pile along with soil.
- Water regularly to keep moist.
- Turn the pile often to ensure an adequate oxygen supply.
- Break up large pieces of material for quicker composting.

### STEP 5: USING FINISHED COMPOST

Finished compost is earthy smelling and crumbly and dark brown in appearance.

Once your compost is done, it can be used to improve soil structure in your garden or lawn as well as improve insect/disease resistance in your garden plants and trees. It can be used in potting mixes and for sowing seeds indoors.

