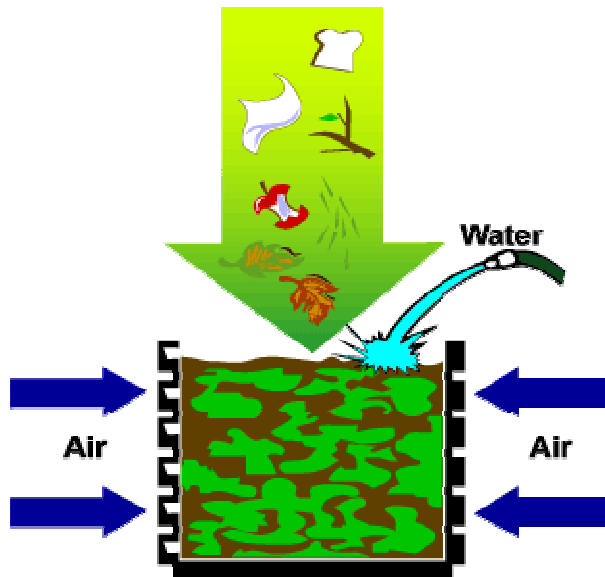


# Backyard Composting



Backyard composting is an attractive, simple method of managing organic wastes at home. It has the advantage of being readily adaptable to fit individual lifestyles, income, yard size, and overall ambition. Backyard composting can be performed by a variety of methods. Typically, these include placing materials in open piles, burying materials in pits or trenches and enclosing materials in drums or [bins](#) (e.g., holding bins, turning bins, and worm bins). In order to heat up properly, compost piles should be at least one cubic yard in size. This provides the minimal insulation required to sustain the high temperatures in the core of the pile. Composting bins can either be commercial units, or can be simply constructed from inexpensive materials with little carpentry skills.



Start the composting process with 50% green materials and 50% brown materials cut into pieces no larger than 1" in size. Mix the materials and add water every 7-10 days. Your compost is ready to use when it's dark brown, crumbly and smells like fresh turned earth.

The compost produced by composting is an excellent soil conditioner. It enhances the structure of soil by binding soil particles together. This improves aeration and helps soil to retain water and nutrients. Compost also improves drainage in clay soils and water retention in sandy soils. Compost improves the buffering capacity of the soil and minimizes adverse effects to plants due to extreme shifts in soil pH.

Adding compost to soil also attracts earthworms, which aerate the soil and add additional nutrients to the soil. Compost can store nutrients and release them slowly for use by surrounding plants. Although highly beneficial for soil, most composts are not considered fertilizers because they lack the amount of nitrogen necessary to be classed a fertilizer.

## Things to Compost

### Green Materials

- Grass clippings
- Garden trimmings
- Green leaves
- Fruit and vegetable scraps
- Coffee grounds and filters
- Tea leaves and bags

### Brown Materials

- Wood chips and sawdust
- Shredded yard wastes
- Pine and fir needles
- Straw and hay
- Dry grass and leaves
- Nut shells
- Stale bread
- Shredded paper

