

# Composting



Save Time. Save Money.  
Help your garden grow!



## What is Compost?

Compost is a dark, crumbly, sweet smelling material, similar to the top layer of soil in a forest. It is an excellent soil additive, which can help transform heavy red clay into rich fertile soil. Plants grown in compost-enriched soil are healthier and more vigorous.

Compost helps you use water and fertilizer more efficiently, saving money while helping the environment. You can make compost yourself from kitchen and garden waste right in your own back yard.

## Why Compost?

Home composting is an environmentally friendly and economically wise way to manage yard trimmings and food waste. It costs less than bagging leaves, saves tax dollars spent on trash hauling, and provides 'black gold' to enrich your yard and garden.

## Compost Ins and Outs

In Mecklenburg County, leaves and other garden wastes are the basic ingredients of a trouble free home compost pile. Many other materials can be composted, but it's wise to keep some things out of your pile.

**Things to keep out:** dog and cat waste, meats, bones, grease, oil, dairy products, herbicide or pesticide treated plants, weeds gone to seed, coal ash (wood ash is ok), diseased plants and invasive weeds.

### Fresh grass clippings

Fresh grass clippings tend to mat together in a compost pile, causing smells and attracting flies. It is best to allow the grass to dry out completely, or 'grass cycle' by leaving clippings on your lawn to break down. This provides fertilizer and organic matter for your lawn.

## Making Compost in Your Own Backyard.

The following ingredients are idea ingredients for composting:

**Browns (carbon):** Dried leaves, annual weeds without seeds, corn stalks, straw, hay, dried grass clippings, cardboard or shredded newspaper, untreated wood chips, sticks, and wood ash.

**Water:** Put the bin where you can reach it with a hose but well away from groundwater sources such as well houses or streams.

**Greens (nitrogen):** grass-fed animal manure, fruit and vegetable scraps, rinsed eggshells, coffee grounds, teabags, filters, fresh green plant trimmings.

## Making The Bin

Cut a 12.5' length of 3' welded wire fencing (2" x 4" mesh). Connect the ends to form a cylinder.



## Making A Batch of Hot Compost

When making a hot and fast pile, it's best to make compost in "batches." Fill your bin to the top with the right mix of materials. Repeat the following steps until the bin is full.

1. Start with a 2-4 inch layer of a brown, carbon rich material.
2. Then, add a 2-4 inch layer of a green, nitrogen rich material.
3. Add water to create a mixture consistent to that of a wrung out sponge.
4. Repeat steps 1-3, alternating green and brown layers. You may choose to mix the layers as you make them, or you may chose to mix them at the end. Add water as needed to maintain dampness, and top off your pile with a brown layer.

## "Lazy" Leaf Compost

The "cool and slow" method provides compost, but in a longer time frame. It requires no turning and little special attention. Simply set aside an area in a secluded corner of your yard for piling up fallen leaves and other organic materials. Place piles well away from creeks or streams to prevent run-off. You may choose to chop the leaves and organic materials with a mulch mower for faster decomposition. Over two years or less, the material on the bottom will compost. Pull back the top layers, and use the weathered material in your garden. Lawn trimmings can be placed on the pile. **Do not include kitchen scraps in this sort of pile.**

## Using Compost

- A yearly one-inch top application improves the soil for garden plants and vegetables.
- Apply 2 to 3 inches of compost, and mix well into the soil to rejuvenate impoverished soil or establish a new garden plot.
- Compost can be screened for use in potting mixes and with houseplants.

## Buying Compost

High quality compost is available from Mecklenburg County Compost Central, North Mecklenburg Recycling Center, Hickory Grove Recycling Center and The Foxhole Yard Waste Facility.

For prices and information, visit [www.WipeOutWaste.com](http://www.WipeOutWaste.com), or call 311.