

COMPOST: It Makes Plants Happy

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Recycling Connections

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Special Thank You to Co-hosts:



What is your interest in this topic?



What to Expect...



So Many Benefits!

- Helps the environment
- Increases soil fertility which improves plant growth
- Increases soil structure which allows soil to retain water
- Saves money
- Reduces the impact of climate change by storing carbon in the soil
- Increases your self-reliance
- Provides a constant, dependable resource at your finger tips
- Saves burning fuel in garbage trucks
- Saves on landfill space

Hierarchy to Reduce Food Waste and Grow Community



Recent Data

Studies indicate that 23 to 83 pounds per household per month could be diverted through home composting.

*For every 10,000 households composting at home, between 1,400 and 5,000 tons per year could be diverted from curbside collection, with potential savings in avoided disposal costs alone ranging from \$72,000 to \$250,000.**

Source: ILSR, [Yes! In My Backyard: A Home Composting Guide for Local Government](#), pg. 6

What is **compost**?

- It is **NOT** dirt
- It is **NOT** soil
- It **IS** a Soil Amendment



What is **composting**?



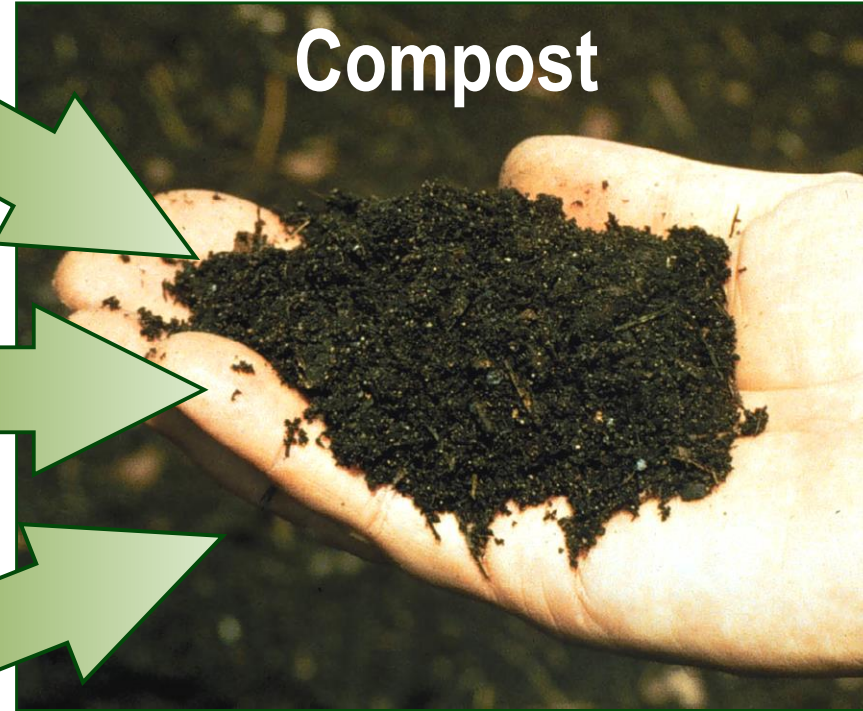
Grass Clippings



Food Scraps



Leaves



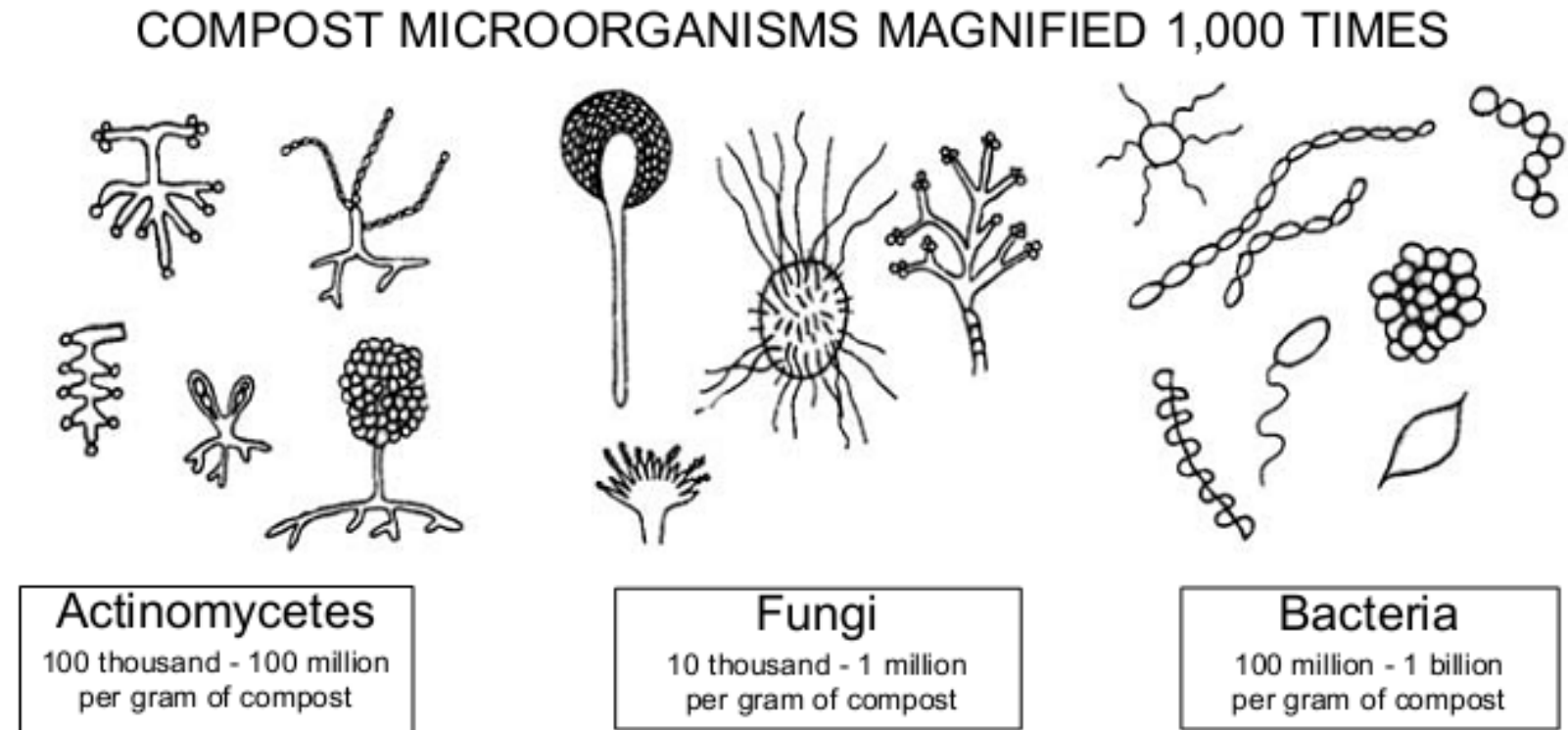
Compost

Recycling Naturally

Microbes are the Workhorses

Keep them
happy and
they will work
for you!

The Key to Composting





Keep Microbes Happy

WATER

OXYGEN

FOOD

“HOME”

WATER

- Needed by decomposers
- Damp as a rung out sponge
- 40-60% moisture

THE "HAND SQUEEZE" MOISTURE TEST



Take handfuls from different places in your compost pile and give them a squeeze!

At the ideal moisture level, a few drops of water should appear between your knuckles and it should feel like a wrung-out sponge.

Source: ILSR Home Composting Basics



OXYGEN

Aerobic decomposers:

- Love O₂
- Work fast
- Decent smell

Anaerobic decomposers:

- Do NOT like O₂
- Work SLOW
- Produce sulfur and other foul smelling gasses

FOOD - NITROGEN

aka **GREENS** or **FRESH**



FOOD - CARBON

aka **BROWNS** or **DRY**



Mix 2 to 3 parts of brown materials to 1 part of green materials by volume

What NOT to compost?

- Meat, bones, or fat
- Dairy products
- Oils
- Whole branches, logs
- Dog/cat or human waste
- Charcoal
- Treated wood
- Persistent weeds
- Kids 😊



Bedding / Manure

Bedding and manure are great for composting

- Chickens, guinea pigs, rabbits, cow, horse, etc.

-
- Heat pile to 140-160 degrees F
 - Must balance Nitrogen(manure) / Carbon(bedding)
 - Turn often wearing gloves, good footwear, and mask or bandana when turning



HOME

PILE

PROS:

Easy!



CONS:

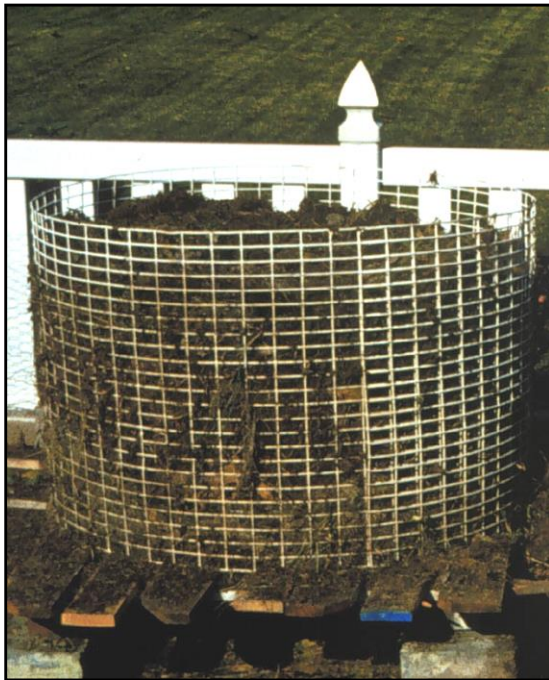
- Ugly
- Slow
- Attracts pests
- Can get out of hand

HOME

DIY Bin

PROS:

- Cheap
- Easy
- Does the job



CONS:

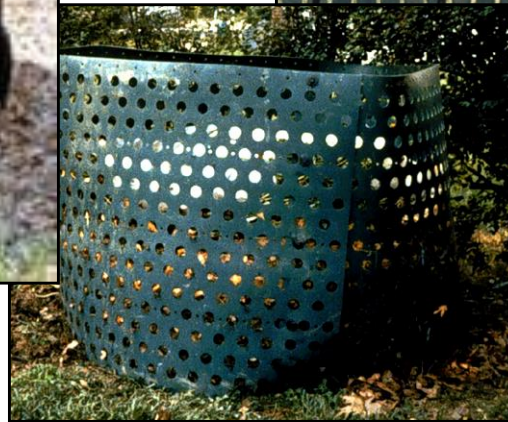
- Time
- Can be unsightly
- Finding materials
- Common Mistakes

HOME

Purchased Bin

PROS:

- Easy
- Durable
- Looks Nice



CONS:

- Expensive
- Parts lost or damaged

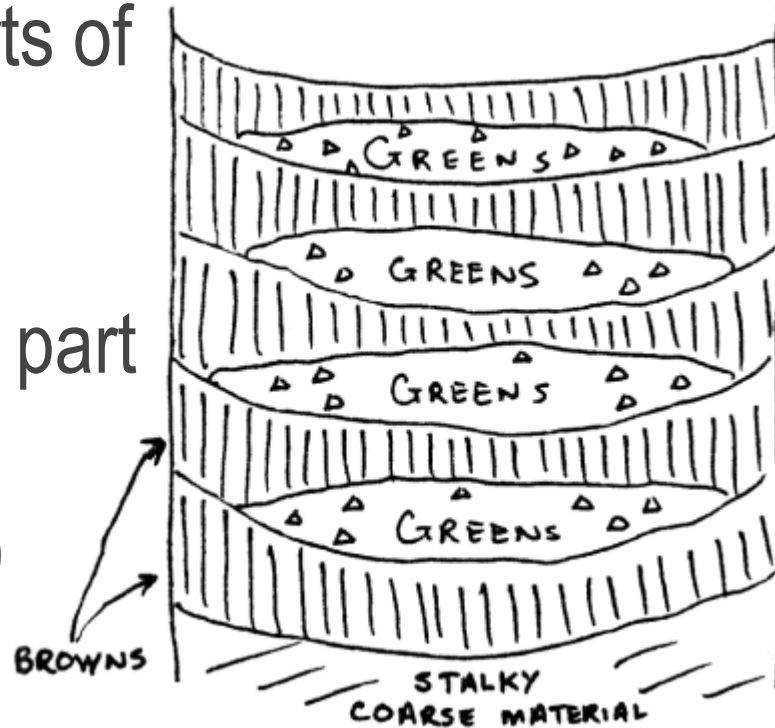
Placement

- Sunny or Shade?
- Convenient
- Near garden with space for material storage
- 2' away from building
- Not directly against a fence
- Near water source
- Good drainage



Lasagna Layering

Mix 2 to 3 parts of
browns
(carbon/dry)
materials to 1 part
of green
(nitrogen/wet)
materials by
volume



Cold Composting

- Passive (Layer it and leave it)
- Low-effort
- Little attention to watering and creating optimal conditions
- Slower (takes a year minimum)
- Weed seeds may persist



Hot Composting

- Layer browns and greens Turn pile every 5-7 days (winter months not applicable)
- Water when turning (if needed)
- Finished compost in 6 weeks – 6 mo.
- Temperatures - Hot active composting happens between 130 to 160°F. The pile needs to reach over 150°F for 3 days straight to prevent many seeds from sprouting



Finished Compost:

- is dark brown, crumbly & you don't recognize leaves, grass, food scraps
- smells earthy like a greenhouse
- doesn't reheat

Compost Troubleshooting ~ Odors

Rotten odor

- Putrid smell or rotten egg smell
- Usually results from anaerobic conditions
- Excess moisture, compaction
- Turn pile, add dry porous material (browns), cover kitchen scraps

Ammonia odor

- Too much nitrogen (greens)
- Add high carbon material (browns) & turn pile



Compost Troubleshooting ~ Temperatures

Low pile temperature

- Pile too small, cold weather, too dry, poor aeration, or lacks nitrogen
- Make pile bigger or insulate sides, add water, turn the pile, add greens or manure

High pile temperature

- Pile too large, insufficient ventilation
- Reduce pile size, turn



Temperatures - Steady composting takes place in the 80 to 130°F range and hot active composting between 130 to 160°F. The pile needs to reach over 150°F for 3 days straight to prevent many seeds from sprouting

Compost Troubleshooting ~ Animals

Pests: raccoons, rats, insects

- meat scraps or fatty food waste, rotten odors
- Compost in an animal-proof bin
- Use worm composting (vermicomposting) for food scraps



Bins You Can Count On!

- Employee's Top Pick for 20 years
- 100% recycled plastic made in North America
- Black to absorb heat quickly
- 128 gallon capacity (can hold six to eight 30-gallon bags of yard material)
- Easy to use, simple to assemble and move
- Long-lasting
- A door that slides open at the bottom giving you easy access to finished compost
- A tight lid keeping pests out; yet is well vented to decompose organic material well
- Comes with a copy of the book "The Composting Cookbook"



Bins You Can Count On!

Discount available:

1. Farmshed Plant Sale
www.farmshed.org/plantsale/
Upon check-out, add this discount code
“startcomposting”
2. Reserve online & pick up at Recycling
Connections
www.recyclingconnections.org/online-store
and select “pay upon pick-up” at Recycling
Connections and write “startcomposting” in the
comments box upon ordering

(Offer Expires May 31st. Limited to 1/customer. While supplies last.)





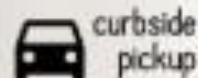
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collective

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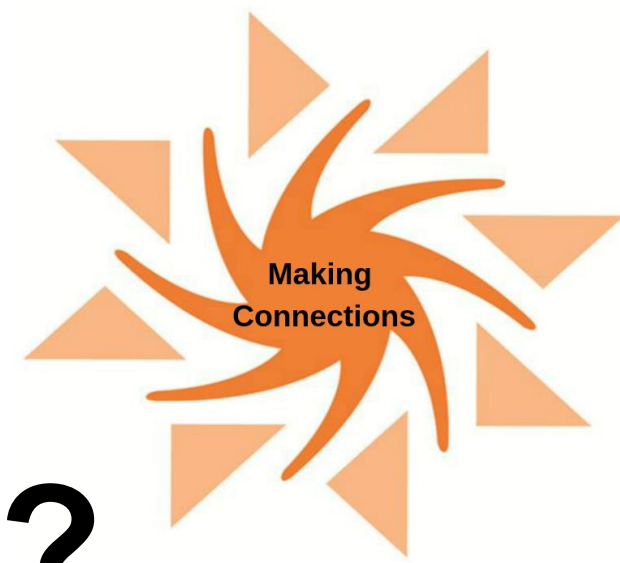
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Upcoming Webinars

Reducing Confusion on Packaging & Food Ware by Karin Sieg, Executive Director May 27th at 6:30pm on Zoom

Waste & Recycling in Portage County by Kelly Adlington, Project Coordinator
Date/Time TBD on Zoom





Happy Composting!

QUESTIONS ???

Like what you heard?

Consider a donation today

www.RecyclingConnections.org

Special thanks to the following for some photo and slide information:

