

WHY COMPOST?

Composting is nature’s way of recycling. It is a natural process that turns food scraps and yard waste into a nutrient-rich soil amendment. Compost improves soil health by conserving water and provides essential nutrients for plant growth.

You can compost at home using select food scraps from your kitchen, dry leaves, and small woody material from your yard. Composting involves minimal effort, equipment, expense, and expertise.



HOW IT WORKS

Good compost comes from a mix of browns and greens – which are carbon-rich and nitrogen-rich materials. If the mix is off, the pile will not heat up enough and microbes will not activate and begin breaking down the material. Aim for a ratio of three or four brown to one green, but don’t worry about being too precise.

Backyard compost piles cannot accept as many materials as food scrap drop off recycling programs. Please refer to the DO--it can go in your backyard compost bin – and DO NOT – it can’t, lists below.

 **DO PLACE IN COMPOST PILE**

-  **YARD WASTE**
grass, leaves, pine needles, plant trimmings, weeds without seeds
-  **KITCHEN WASTE**
fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, egg shells
-  **NON-RECYCLABLE PAPERS**
paper towels, napkins, egg cartons
-  **IN SMALL AMOUNTS**
sawdust, wood chips, small sticks
-  **WOOD ASHES**
add in small amounts. Ashes act as a source of lime and affect the pH of your compost

 **DO NOT PLACE IN COMPOST PILE**

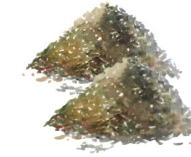
-  **MEAT & DAIRY**
meat pieces, dairy products, bones, fish scraps, eggs
-  **FATS**
cooking oil, drippings and grease
-  **SYNTHETICS**
glass, plastic, styrofoam, polyester
-  **FECES**
from dogs, cats, and humans
-  **AVOID**
Weeds with seeds and large pieces of wood



- Keep your compost pile damp, like a wrung out sponge. If your compost pile has a bad odor, it lacks air circulation or it may be too wet. Try turning and/or adding dry material.



- If your compost pile is not heating up, it may need more nitrogen or “green” material. Try turning the pile and/or adding dry material..



- You can keep adding to your pile as it is composting; however, you may want to start a second pile if you have enough materials, to avoid compacting materials already present.



WET MATERIAL



Greens are a source of nitrogen, they are colorful and wet. They provide nutrients and moisture to your pile.



DRY MATERIAL



Browns are the carbon source, providing energy, absorbing excess moisture, and giving a structural strength to your pile. They help keep the pile porous, facilitate air flow and prevent compaction.



**Anoka County Recycling and Resource Solutions-
Backyard Composting**
AnokaCountyMN.gov/Backyard-Composting



**University of Minnesota Extension Service-
Composting in Home Gardens**
[extension.umn.edu/managing-soil-and-nutrients/
composting-home-gardens](http://extension.umn.edu/managing-soil-and-nutrients/composting-home-gardens)



**US Environmental Protection Agency-
Composting at home**
epa.gov/recycle/composting-home



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**BACKYARD
COMPOSTING**

Your guide to start
composting at home.

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