

## Let Nature Work for You!

### What is Compost and Why do it?

Compost is created through a natural biological process called decomposition, in more or less controlled circumstances.

The natural process of decay will change organic wastes into a valuable humus-like material called compost.

There are many benefits to composting. It is a simple and inexpensive way to dispose of and recycle food scraps and yard waste that would otherwise enter the waste stream.

Compost also helps improve the health and quality of the soil when added.



Compost is ready when it looks dark and crumbly and none of the starting ingredients are visible.

| Do Compost       | Don't Compost       |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Grass Clippings  | Meat                |
| Leaves           | Fish, poultry       |
| Dead Plants      | Dairy products      |
| Fruit wastes     | Grease              |
| Coffee grounds   | Bones               |
| Straw/Hay        | Treated wood        |
| Vegetable scraps | plastic/glass/metal |
| Hair/lint        | Cat or Dog waste    |

| Troubleshooting Your Pile |                                    |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Problem:                  | Cause:                             |
| Compost Smells            | Turn the pile and add browns       |
| Too wet                   | Turn the pile and add dry material |
| Too dry                   | Turn the pile and add water        |
| Cool to the touch         | Add more greens and turn the pile  |



**Carroll County Department of Public Works**

For more information contact  
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or County Extension Office  
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410-386-2760

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**Carroll County Department of  
Public Works**

**Bureau of Solid Waste**

## Composting Nature's Way To Recycle



**Recycling Operations**  
[www.recyclecarroll.org](http://www.recyclecarroll.org)



# Composting Made Easy

*You can compost in a variety of ways.  
Just make sure you select a convenient  
and well-drained location to compost*

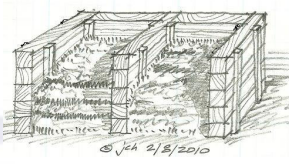
Manufactured bin



Wire mesh bin



to permit air, but small enough to contain the materials that are composting. Several holding bins linked together can be used for building and turning active compost piles.



Single Chamber and Multi Chambered Bins

## Choose a System

### Holding Bins or Piles:

A holding unit only requires placing wastes into a pile or bin as they are generated. You can give your pile some structure with chicken wire, snow fencing, or by nailing scrap wood together to make a four-sided box.

Non-woody materials such as grass clippings, crop wastes, garden weeds, and leaves work best in these systems. Openings in the sides need to be large enough

## Building the Pile

**The Recipe:** Browns for carbon, greens for nitrogen, air for organisms, water for moisture and the heat created through natural decomposition helps the microorganisms as well as the chemical reactions that transform your waste.

**Browns** are dry materials such as wood chips, small branches, twigs, shredded paper, dried leaves, plants, and straw. Brown materials reduce unpleasant odors.

**Greens** are wet materials such as fresh grass clippings, fruit and vegetable remains (ex. fruit peels, coffee grounds, and tea bags), green leaves and soft garden prunings. Green materials supply the compost nitrogen.

**Air** is essential for the survival of aerobic organisms.

**Water** keeps the organisms alive and dissolves the materials.



Geo-bin  
lightweight black

**Heat** is created as the microbes work. Their activity causes temperatures within the pile to rise to as much as 160 degrees F., which speeds the process and kills many diseases, organisms and weed seeds.

## Slow /Fast Compost

**Slow or Cold:** There is no maintenance to this form of

composting, but keep in mind that the process is slow and will take a year or longer for the material to break down into compost material. **Fast:** Hot composting happens when you follow the basics carefully and the pile is about a cubic yard (3'x3'x3'). Turn your pile about once a week and you can have compost in a few months.

## Compost Layering

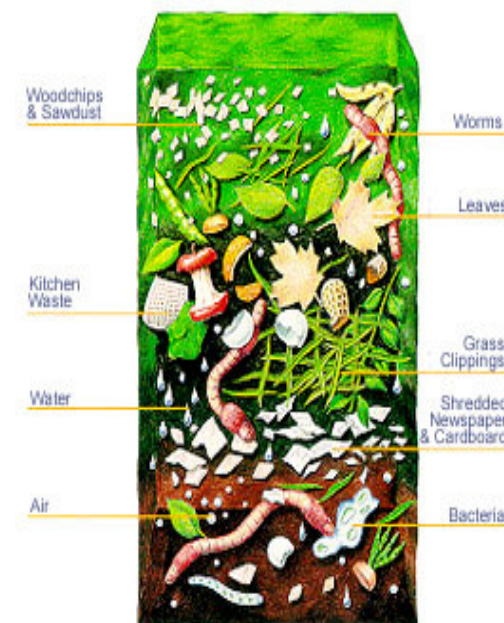
Loosen soil under the area where the bin or pile will be placed.

**Add** your brown materials making sure larger pieces are chopped or shredded. (2-8 inches).

**Mix** grass clippings and green waste and layer onto the pile burying fruit and vegetable waste.

**Water** as needed to make "sponge" moist.

**Repeat** layers watering as needed.



*The ideal compost pile contains browns and greens placed in alternate layers of different sized particles. Generally three part browns to one part greens.*