

Composting 101

KNOW BEFORE YOU THROW!

Conserving  and Sharing Natural Texas Beauty

#PLEDGETOPLANTSMART

What is Composting?

Composting is a natural process where microbes break down organic waste into soil amendments. This requires a mixture of air, water, carbon, & nitrogen.

Why Should I Compost?

- To use less water. Compost helps with moisture retention
- Reduce the need for chemical fertilizers
- Keep waste out of our watershed & landfill
- Improve your soil, plant growth & yield
- Helps plants be more disease-resistant
- Moderate the soil's temperature & improve drainage

What Can I Compost?

BROWN MATERIALS

Organic Materials Rich in Carbon



- **Plant materials:** (small twigs, pine needles, wood shavings, dried leaves & plants)
- **Food waste:** (rinsed & crushed eggshells, dry non-sugary cereal, nutshells, uncooked oatmeal)
- **Uncoated paper products:** (shredded)
- **Straw or hay**



GREEN MATERIALS

Organic Materials Rich in Nitrogen

- **Clippings:** (grass, flowers, fresh unwanted or discarded plants)
- **Fruit & veggie scraps**
- **Leaves from house plants**
- **Coffee grounds**

DO NOT COMPOST



- **Meat & fish scraps/bones**
- **Cooking fats or oils**
- **Synthetic fibers**
- **Glossy papers**
- **Diseased plants**
- **Weeds:** (that have gone to seed)
- **Dog & Cat droppings**

How Do I Get Started?

TIPS & TRICKS

1

Choose Your Container

- Make a box, barrel, or pile that is at least 3ft x 3ft, or purchase a compost bin based on your needs.

2

Layer, Layer, Layer!

- Layer or mix the materials in the compost bin to ensure good air circulation. For best results, ensure a 30:1 carbon to nitrogen ratio. If this ratio is right, your compost shouldn't smell!
- Maintain a damp but not wet pile. It should have the consistency of a wrung-out sponge.

3

Aerate or Turn

- Turn the pile with a pitchfork or aeration tool on a regular basis, ideally once a week or every two weeks.

4

When is it ready?

- You can tell when your compost is ready when it is dark in color, soft & fluffy, nearly uniform in texture, and smells earthy. PS: Your pile will shrink 75% in size when composting is complete!

5

Add to Garden!

- Add it to your garden a few weeks prior to planting to give it a chance to improve the soil.

PRO TIPS!

- You may need to start over if your compost is smelling rancid, matted, or slimy, attracting rodents or flies, cool to the touch & if nothing is happening.
- To avoid starting over, try adjusting the amount of air, water, & green/brown material in your compost when you experience one of these symptoms.



Let's Start Composting!

Composting is a great way to maintain a healthy landscape while using less water. Interested in learning more easy ways to conserve water both indoors and outdoors?

Head to NTMWD.com/SaveWater for more year around watering tips.

Know More. Water Less.