

TROUBLESHOOTING

What to do if you have...

■ Odors

Turn pile to aerate and dry out if it smells like rotten eggs. Increase C:N ratio by adding woody material if it smells like ammonia. Avoid any grease, oils or meat. Cover exposed food scraps with soil or sawdust. Relocate bin, or use a bin with a lid.

■ Pests

Avoid any grease, oils or meat. Avoid cat or dog feces in the pile. Cover exposed food scraps. Choose a secure bin design with lid. Control fire ants with preventive bait products.

■ Heavy/compact compost

Improve drainage. Cover compost during rain. Aerate more frequently. Add bulking materials to improve structure (wood or brush chips, sawdust, straw). Avoid excessive soil.

■ Cold/slow compost

Maintain even moisture. Check size of pile to assure a balance of heat retention and aeration (minimum open pile size 3' x 3' x 3'). Cover pile to help retain heat. Increase nitrogen to encourage microbe activity.

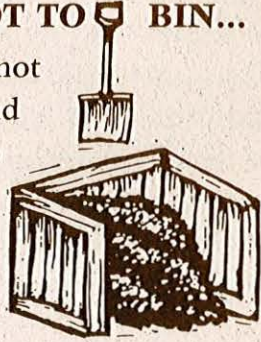
■ Tips

- Wear a mask when turning pile to prevent inhalation of mold spores.
- Never compost pet wastes.
- Compost wood ashes, not charcoal or coal ashes.

- Avoid using materials treated with pesticides.
- Chopping or shredding of material speeds composting.
- Maintain moisture at the consistency of a well-wrung sponge.
- Adding organic starters/activators or earthworms may be helpful.

TO BIN OR NOT TO BIN...

Compost bins are not found in nature and are not required to compost. Bins may be helpful in retaining heat, regulating moisture, reducing space needed, excluding pests, reducing odors or improving pile appearance. Cost can range from \$10 to \$200 or more. The following are some readily available or easily made bin types.



- Col Met Compost Bin
- Shepherd Complete Composter
- Soilsaver
- ComposTumbler
- Green Magic Tumbler
- LawnFil Compost Bin
- Seattle Composter
- Bio-Orb Composter
- Wooden Pallets (4)
- Chicken Wire (10 ft.)
- Snow Fence (13 ft.)
- Trash Can

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COMPOSTING Nature's Recycling

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COMPOST—THE SAVING SOLUTION

Because almost 50 percent of the solid waste stream is potentially reusable material, recycling and composting are near the top of the EPA's hierarchy of waste management. In an effort to conserve landfill space and promote composting, the Montgomery Clean City Commission (MCCC) is encouraging residents to compost at home and further extend the life of our landfill.

The MCCC recommends citizens compost their yard trimmings at home. By recovering compostable material at the source, citizens can save the City of Montgomery money and landfill and provide themselves with a useful product. Simple rules and some "hands on" experience will allow anyone to recycle successfully his yard and vegetative kitchen wastes.

There is a difference between "composting" and "piling up leaves." Composting is the biological decomposition of organic material through a natural aerobic process (requiring the presence of oxygen). The resulting product is a rich soil-like substance. Rotting occurs when decomposition takes place in anaerobic conditions (in the absence of oxygen), resulting in the production of an unusable product.



The five W's of composting

WHO?

Anyone can compost! No special knowledge, skill or experience is needed, but a person must be willing to give a small amount of time regularly to monitor his compost. Individuals can reduce and reuse paper products, vegetative kitchen waste, grass, leaves and plant material and animal husbandry by-products by composting.

WHAT?

Composting of solid waste, food waste and agricultural waste has been practiced in many countries for centuries. Unlike landfilling, which simply stockpiles solid waste without access to air, water or light, composting results in the recovery of a valuable product which can be reused.

WHERE?

Composting may be practiced by individuals or on a community-wide basis. It may be simple or elaborate and can easily be adjusted to available time and space. Backyard bins may take up three to 10 square feet of space and can accommodate the amounts of material typically produced by suburban households.

WHY?

Solid waste disposal is a growing problem for every community. The State of Alabama has established a goal to reduce the volume of solid waste by 25 percent. Individuals can take responsibility for reducing a large part of the waste stream through recycling and composting. As much as 30 to 50 percent of solid waste in our landfill is made up of compostable materials.

WOW!

Instead of bagging your leaves and grass clippings for disposal, use them to make compost. Replace expensive fertilizers and soil amendments with your own nutrient-rich product. Use it to improve your soil and save on watering. In addition to saving tax dollars by reducing waste collection and landfill costs, you will be contributing to a clean and environmentally sound community. You can be a part of the solid waste solution.

For information about backyard composting, call MCCC at 241-2175. For information about solid waste collection procedures, call the Solid Waste Division at 241-2750.

FAVORITE RECIPE

Composting is nature's way of recycling. Layering materials and maintaining moisture and air in the pile can produce results in a few weeks. This composting recipe calls for the basic ingredients needed; the results depend on your efforts to experiment with what you have available.

For fast, efficient composting, certain proportions work best. The ideal ratios of carbon to nitrogen (C:N) range between 25:1 and 40:1. Compost piles consisting of common yard waste and vegetative kitchen scraps require little or no supplemental nitrogen. When woodier materials are added, additional nitrogen may be required (one pound of actual nitrogen per 50 pounds of materials).

■ Ingredients

Organic material:

Humus (compost)	15:1	Oak leaves	50:1
Lawn clippings	20:1	Pine needles	70:1
Vegetable waste	20:1	Wood chips	200:1

Oxygen: Introduced through layering and turning or aerating the compost

Soil/Compost: Provides microbes necessary for composting to occur

■ Utensils Needed

A hose, pitchfork, lawn mower or shredding equipment (optional)

■ Instructions

- 1) Water ingredients to moisten throughout;
- 2) Stir as needed to keep loose and airy;
- 3) Simmer at 85° to 115° until dark and crumbly;
- 4) Serve up for all your gardening needs!