

COMPOSTING

NATURE'S RECYCLING

Compost is typically used as mulch for your lawn and garden areas as a soil amendment prior to planting, or as a component in potting mixes.

Learn more at:
austinrecycles.com

LET NATURE DO THE WORK FOR YOU

Composting is a great way to recycle your kitchen waste and yard trimmings, reduce your trash output and generate a free and rich soil conditioner.

Compost will improve your soil and plants while helping Austin be a healthier, more sustainable city.

By composting, you're helping the City of Austin reduce the amount of trash sent to landfills, which reduces greenhouse gases and saves natural resources.

BENEFITS:

- Reduce trash
- Grow healthy, vibrant plants
- Reduce chemical use
- Protect the groundwater
- Save money
- Help Austin reach its Zero Waste goal to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills by 90% by 2040.

HOW DOES COMPOSTING WORK?

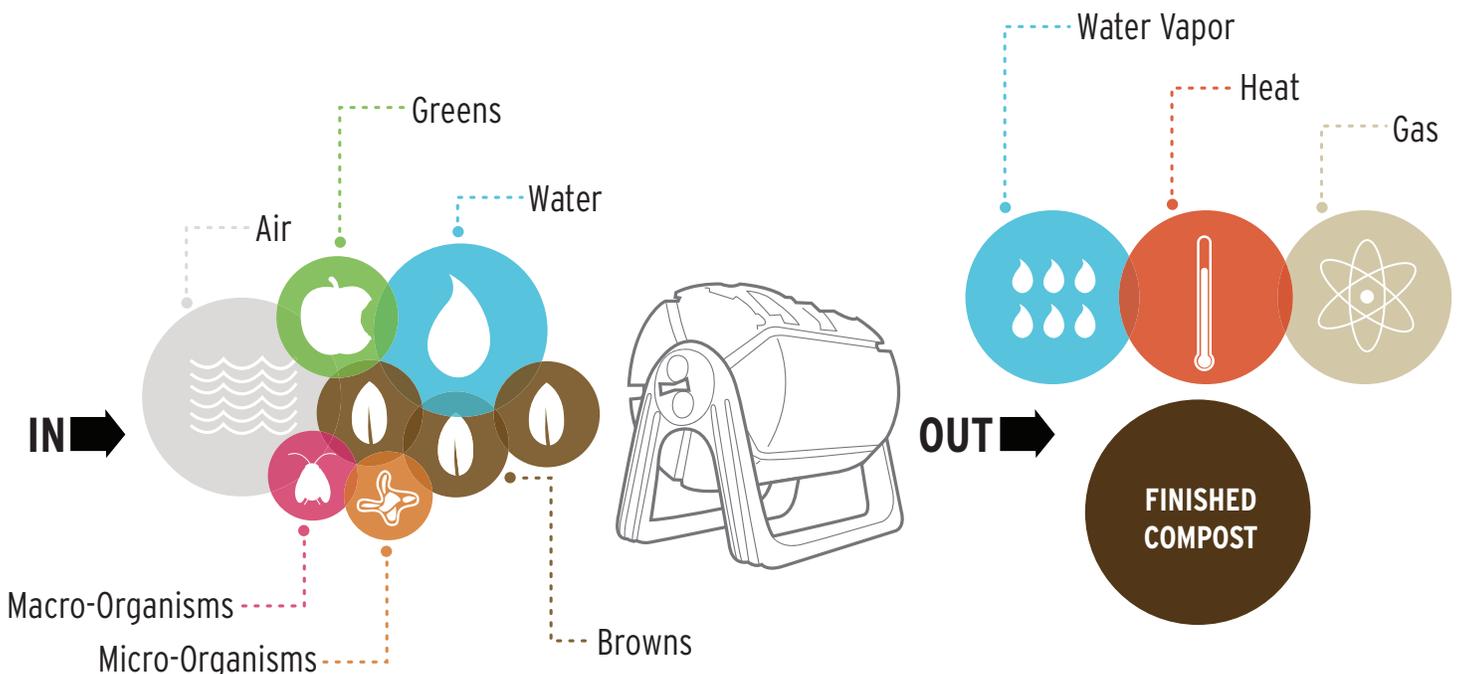
Add nitrogen-rich greens and carbon-rich browns to your compost bin or pile.

Add water and "turn" materials.

Micro-organisms that you can't see (such as bacteria and fungi) and macro-organisms you can see (such as mites, earthworms, and other insects) consume and break down material.

With enough air and water, the micro-organisms will produce heat.

Hot compost decomposes faster than cold compost. If there is not enough water and oxygen, the micro-organisms will die resulting in a slow rate of decomposition.



HOW TO GET STARTED:

First decide if you want a compost pile (a small area of the yard where you mix your ingredients) (Fig. 1) or a fabricated compost bin or tumbler (Fig. 2-3).

Generally, a bin or enclosed pile is recommended to discourage pests and make it easier to access the finished compost.

There are many commercially produced compost bins (Fig. 2-3), or you can build your own from numerous plans available online (Fig. 1).

The ideal bin size is 3 feet by 3 feet by 3 feet.

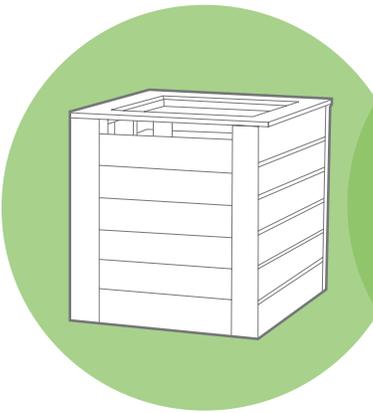


Fig. 1 Build-your-own pile



Fig. 2 Cone



Fig. 3 Tumbler



Fig. 4 Indoor composter

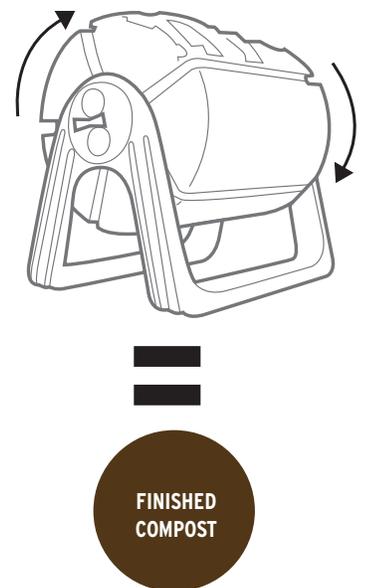
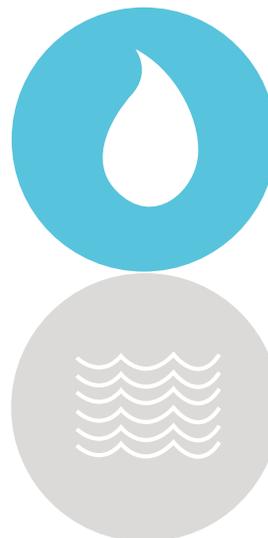
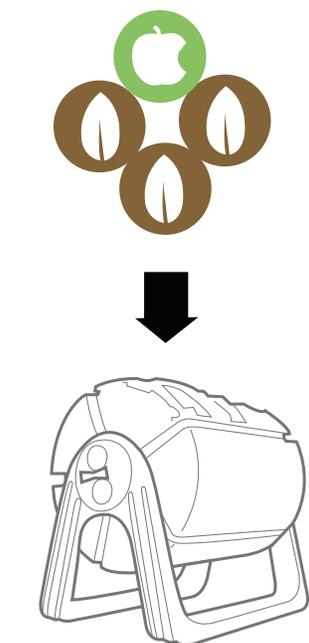
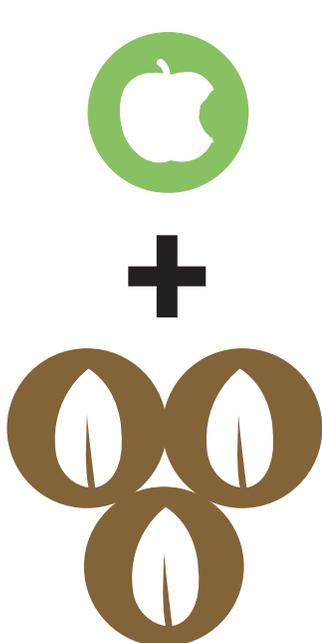
HOW TO MAKE COMPOST:

1. Add roughly one share of nitrogen-rich greens and three shares of carbon-rich browns.

2. Combine into a pile, pre-made compost bin or tumbler (Fig. 1-4).

3. Add some water and mix. Make sure your pile has enough air and water. The mixture should be as moist as a wrung out sponge.

4. Mix occasionally and allow decomposition to occur for a few months.



WHAT TO PLACE IN YOUR COMPOST BIN OR PILE:

"IF IT GROWS, IT GOES"

NITROGEN-RICH MATERIALS - "THE GREENS"

VEGETABLE/FRUIT PEELINGS AND SCRAPS

Onion skins, potato peelings, lettuce, corn cobs, garlic tops, artichoke leaves, pickles

Apple cores, banana peels, citrus peels, pineapple skin, watermelon rinds

Spoiled vegetables and fruits (including juice), canned or from the freezer

INEDIBLE FOOD LEFTOVERS

Crushed egg shells, bread and pie crust, burned toast, oatmeal, stale bread, potato chips, cereal, cookies

Old pasta, rice and tofu, popcorn, pumpkin seeds, olives, avocados and dates (including pits), nut and peanut shells

Spices, wine gone bad and old beer, soy and rice milk, sugars, gelatin

TEA AND COFFEE SCRAPS

Tea bags and leaves, coffee grounds, filters, bags and burlaps

FRESH GRASS CLIPPINGS & PLANTS

Houseplant trimmings, Spanish moss

CARBON-RICH MATERIALS - "THE BROWNS"

DEAD OR DRIED GRASS CLIPPINGS

Fallen leaves, dead or dried flowers

Old, dried up herbs, aquarium plants

WOOD CHIPS, STRAW AND HAY

Wooden toothpicks, sawdust, pencil shavings

PAPER

Paper bags, napkins, towels and tissues, newspapers, comics, tickets, cards, envelopes, receipts, paper notes, computer paper, junk mail, shredded paper, paperboard, cardboard

NATURAL FIBERS

Lint from clothes dryer, dust bunnies from under the bed, wool socks, vacuum cleaner bag contents, cotton swabs, cotton balls

WHAT NOT TO PLACE IN YOUR COMPOST BIN OR PILE:

All meat, poultry and fish products or bones

Nylon tea bags

Big or chunky wood material

Plastic cotton swabs

Dairy products

Anything not biodegradable (plastic, metal, glass)

Waxed paper

Synthetic fibers

Very greasy and oily food

Ash from coal, wood or charcoal

Glossy paper

Weeds and invasive plants

HOW TO KNOW IT'S READY:

THE JAR TEST

Put some compost in a jar, add water to make it soggy, and seal the jar tightly.

Leave it alone for a week, then open the jar carefully. Check for odor. If it smells like nice wet earth, then the compost is done.

Finished compost is dark brown or black and crumbly with a rich, earthy smell. Using compost in the late summer or fall is ideal so that you can make room in your compost bin for fall leaves.



KITCHEN COMPOST COLLECTOR:

Collect your green, nitrogen-rich materials (food scraps) in a kitchen compost collector.

Keep your collector in the freezer to reduce odor and for easy access while cooking.

Empty the contents of your compost collector into your compost pile at least every other day.

Mix the material, add some water and cover it with a layer of brown, carbon-rich materials to speed its decomposition and discourage pests.



TROUBLESHOOTING:

Composting is not an exact science. If you combine roughly one part of nitrogen-rich greens to three parts carbon-rich browns to your compost then you will be off to a good start.

Below are some common composting problems and how to fix them.



SYMPTOM

Bad odor

Pile smells OK, but is not decomposing

Liquid is leaking out of the bottom of the bin

Compost not breaking down properly



PROBLEM

Not enough air, too little browns

Not enough water, too little greens

Too much water. Materials should be damp like a wrung-out sponge

Materials are too big



SOLUTION

Turn/mix the compost and add more browns

Moisten pile, turn material and add more greens

Add more of the dry browns and turn/mix the compost

Cut materials into smaller pieces

MORE INFORMATION ON COMPOSTING:

http://austinrecycles.com/zerowaste_composting.htm
epa.gov/epawaste/conservation/rrr/composting/index.htm
www.tceq.state.tx.us/assistance/nav/composting.html
www.compostingguide.com