

Home composting

The benefits of home composting

Compost can be used on vegetable gardens and flower beds or around trees. It makes an excellent mulch to discourage weeds and help maintain soil moisture.

- Reduced amount of waste sent to landfill (approximately 40 to 60% of household waste is compostable).
- Reduced production of methane from landfill, a powerful greenhouse gas.
- Improved soil health, structure and ability to hold water.
- Increased disease resistance in plants and reduced dependence on artificial fertilisers and pesticides.
- It can save you money!

How to compost

1. **Find a place for your compost bin or heap.** Place your compost bin or heap directly onto the bare soil, away from the house and in a sunny spot with good drainage. If using a worm farm place in a shady area or you may cook your worms!
2. **Start your compost** with a 10cm layer of woody or brown materials (such as shredded leaves or garden organics), then add a 5cm layer of food scraps or grass clippings. Repeat this when adding layers to create a compost pile which is aerated and moist, which will accelerate the composting process.
3. **Maintain.** Keep the compost moist (but not too wet). Turn and mix the material weekly to increase aeration and help prevent odours.
4. **Harvest.** Your compost should be matured (ready for use on your garden) within 3 to 6 months, depending on your type of system.

When is my compost mature?

- It smells earthy – not sour or like ammonia
- It no longer heats up after being turned or watered
- Is dark brown and resembles soil
- Is crumbly and no longer contains any identifiable food or garden items

Composting methods

Covered heap

Suited to those with large gardens or lawns, a covered heap should be enclosed by bricks or timber. Ideal dimensions are 1m by 2m wide and 1m high. Make sure you can access the heap to turn the compost, and cover the top with some old carpet or a hessian bag.

Worm farm

Worm farms not only produce compost, but a rich soil-like substance called 'castings' that can be used as fertiliser. They are available in a range of sizes from hardware stores. Citrus fruit and dairy products cannot be placed in worm farms and the process varies so follow instructions carefully.

Compost bin

A better option for smaller gardens, plastic compost bins can be purchased from nurseries or hardware stores. They should be open at the bottom with a tight fitting lid on top.

Compost tumbler

Another option ideal for smaller gardens. They consist of a barrel which is held off the ground to enable it to be turned for aeration. They are often quicker to produce compost than other methods and can also be purchased from nurseries or hardware stores.

What can I compost?

YES!

- Bread, cereal, pasta and grains
- Vegetable and fruit scraps
- Tea leaves and tea bags
- Coffee grounds
- Crushed egg shells
- Paper and cardboard (shredded)
- Paper towel and tissues
- Egg cartons and pizza boxes (shredded)
- Vacuum cleaner dust
- Clothes dryer lint
- Grass clippings, sticks and twigs
- Weeds, leaves and flowers
- Sawdust
- Chicken or rabbit droppings (any herbivorous animal)

NO!

- Dog or cat droppings (any carnivorous animal)
- Meat, fish and bones
- Dairy products
- Oils and fats
- Diseased plants
- Mature weeds with seeds
- Ashes
- Plastic
- Glass
- Metal
- Nappies
- Chemicals

