



Lane County Public Works
Waste Management Division
3100 East 17th Avenue
Eugene, OR 97403

Recycler's Guide to Basic Composting



Turn your
garbage into
gardener's gold!
It's easy, it's smart,
it's recycling.

Information in this brochure
is accurate as of April 2014,
and is subject to change.



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Why Compost?

Composting is nature's way of recycling. It is a satisfying way to turn your fruit, vegetable and yard trimmings into a dark, crumbly, sweet-smelling soil conditioner.

Composting:

- Saves you money by lowering garbage bills and replacing store-bought soil conditioners.
- Helps garden and house plants by improving the fertility and health of your soil.
- Saves water by helping the soil hold moisture and reducing water runoff.
- Benefits the environment by recycling valuable organic resources and extending the life of our landfill.



Compost Works For You

In Yard and Garden

Compost adds nutrients and beneficial microbes, holds water, and improves plant growth. Mix compost into annual garden beds at least once a year, Spread a 1" to 6" layer of compost over the soil as a mulch, or spread sifted, weed-seed free compost on turfgrass as a top dressing.

On House Plants

Sprinkle over house-plant soil to provide nutrients or make a great potting soil by mixing one part compost with two parts sand and/or soil.

Don't Have A Garden?

You can still make compost. Use it on a house plant, give it to a friend, sprinkle it around a street tree, or use it in a community garden.

The 4 "R's" Of The Yard

REDUCE the amount of yard trimmings you make by planting slow-growing, drought tolerant plants.

REUSE yard trimmings by grasscycling (mowing more often, and leaving the clippings on the lawn) and by mulching fallen leaves and chipped prunings (spread them 6" deep on paths and around trees and shrubs).

RECYCLE remaining yard trimmings by composting. This brochure shows you how.

RESTORE the environment with thriving gardens. It all starts at home!

Grasscycling

Go Bagless! Leaving grass clippings where they lie contributes enough organic matter and nitrogen to your lawn that fertilization needs are reduced by about 25% per year.

Keys to effective grasscycling:

- Remove only one third of the grass height each time you mow, this not only reduces the size of the clippings, it is also less stressful on the grass.
- Consistent, regular mowing reduces the chances of weeds going to seed and being disbursed naturally in your yard. Never let the grass get over 3" tall.
- Using a sharp blade makes clean cuts, thus reducing the chance for lawn diseases and pests.
- Only mow when the grass is dry.



Choose A System

- Open Piles & Simple Bins are ideal for yard trimmings ONLY.



- Food waste additions require “Active” composting with weekly turning to keep animals out.
- Or use a rodent-proof container with lid; and a floor made of hardware cloth — holes no bigger than 1/4”.



The Earth Machine from BRING Recycling

A local low cost example of commercially available composters. Visit BRING at 4446 Franklin Boulevard, or call (541) 746-3023.

Remember: Don't compost meat, bones, fish, dairy products or grease.

Systems For Just Food Waste

Worm Bins

- Produces excellent fertilizer.
- For indoors or outdoors.
- Most fun! Takes some time and effort to separate worms from finished fertilizer if using simple bins.



Follow The Basics

Thanks to friendly bugs and worms, composting is as easy as “1-2-3”— no matter which compost system you use!

1. **CHOP** materials into 6” pieces or smaller if you want them to break down more quickly.
2. **MIX** enough “browns” (dry, woody materials) with “greens” (moist, green materials) to create a good balance, water as needed. Add materials as often as you like.
3. **MAINTAIN** air and water balance by keeping compost as moist as a wrung-out sponge. Browns, Greens, Air and Water are the “big four” that will keep every compost pile happy. “Active” maintenance, turning once per week prevents animal nesting and feeding.

Harvest rich, brown, finished compost by sifting out coarse, unfinished materials after 3 to 8 months.



The Worm Box — A self-harvesting system Only \$42 (plus shipping) with Lane County Discount! Let nature turn your food scraps and yard trimmings into great garden soil.

The Worm Box is perfect for garage, kitchen or outside use. To order visit: www.CreateCompost.com and enter your zip code. Select the purchase option without worms and go to: www.lanecounty.org/compost for a list of local worm retailers and information on how to keep the worms working for you.



Hot Compost Happens when you follow the basic “1-2-3” carefully, and the pile is about a cubic yard (3’x3’x3’) or more.

Placing your bin in the sun **does not** create hot composting, biological activity does. Biological activity produces heat, this accelerates composting and kills weed seeds and plant diseases but is not necessary. Cold, slow piles are fine but will not kill weed seeds or pathogens. If your pile is large enough, moist, and well chopped, but not heating up, you can turn it and mix in some greens like grass clippings or an organic nitrogen fertilizer. For faster hot composting and better weed-seed kill, turn or mix your hot pile about once a week or so.

REMEMBER... Composting fruit and vegetable wastes should be done in a rodent-resistant system. Use a container with a secure lid, a solid or mesh floor, and no holes bigger than 1/4 inch.

DO COMPOST:

- Most sawdusts
- Chopped, woody prunings
- Pine needles
- Fallen leaves
- Tea bags
- Citrus rinds
- Coffee grounds & filters
- Lawn clippings & young weeds
- Fruit & vegetable trimmings
- Herbivore manures

DON'T COMPOST:

- Meat, bones or fish
- Dairy products or grease
- Grains, beans or breads
- Dog, cat or bird feces
- Plywood/treated wood & its sawdust
- Diseased plants (in cold piles)
- Fruit & vegetable trimmings (in open piles/ simple bins)



Compost Bin Troubleshooting

SYMPTOMS	PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS
Pile not composting	Too dry or the center of the pile is dry	Add water until slightly damp & turn (mix) add fresh green wastes
	Too much brown matter	Add fresh green matter or organic nitrogen fertilizer & turn
Pile smells rotten/attracts flies	Too wet/too many food scraps or lawn clippings, not enough air	Turn & add browns (dry, woody materials) or dry soil
	Food scraps exposed	Bury & mix food scraps into pile
	Rodents in pile/ holes larger than 1/4- inch/ non-compostables	Use traps or baits, rodent proof bin, remove meat, grease, etc., & turn
The pile is damp and warm in the middle but nowhere else	Compost pile is too small	Collect more material and mix the old ingredients into a new pile

For More Information on Composting Visit:

www.lanecounty.org/compost
www.eugenerecycles.org

City of Eugene maintains compost demonstration gardens throughout the city for self guided tours and workshops.

OSU Extension Office offers a Compost Specialist training, as well as free demonstrations to the general public throughout the year. Printed information is available at the extension office, 996 Jefferson St.

Call the hotline for answers to your compost questions 541-344-0265.

Visit your local Library or book store. They are full of resources on composting.