

Resources

These resources will provide more detailed information on home composting.

Videos The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection has produced two video programs entitled *Home Composting - Turning Your Spoils to Soil* and *Don't Trash the Grass*. Download them for free at www.ct.gov/dep/composting. They can also be purchased by calling (860) 424-3555.

Internet resources Search the Internet for "home composting" to find more resources. Some good examples are:

www.composting101.com

www.epa.gov/compost

www.compostinfo.com

Books and Magazines

"Easy Composting – Environmentally Friendly Gardening"
Ortho Books. Many color photographs and excellent presentation.

Composting to Reduce the Waste Stream – A Guide to Small Scale Food and Yard Waste Composting Order through: Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service, 152 Riley Robb Hall, Cooperative Extension, Ithaca, NY 14852-5701 or call (607) 255-7654.

The Real Dirt – The Complete Guide to Backyard, Balcony and Apartment Composting Mark Cullen, Lorraine Johnson. Practical how-to advice, activities for children, bin plans, FAQ's, etc.

These resources are not recommended over any others.

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Source Reduction & Recycling Program.



Compost Bins

You can make your own compost bin from wood pallets or wire mesh. Here's how:



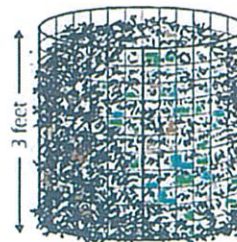
Wood Pallet Bin

Materials: 4 to 6 pallets, 8 heavy-duty plastic ties 18" long. Use 4 pallets to form the side of the bin and fasten the pallets together with ties. You can also use another pallet for a cover and one more for a base.

Wire Mesh Bin

Materials: 12-gauge or medium weight welded wire mesh, 1.5" to 2" mesh. 10' x 3', 6 heavy-duty plastic ties, 5" long

Form a circle with the mesh and fasten with the ties. That's it!



Plastic Bins

You can also purchase a bin from home improvement and garden centers, hardware stores or the Internet at sites such as www.composters.com or www.gardeners.com



Composting Has A-PEEL

An Introduction to Home Composting



Brought to you by the SWRC
(Solid Waste & Recycling Committee)
of Readfield and Wayne
with financial assistance from the
Maine Recycling
Toolkit Assistance Grant

Maine government resource
www.yardscaping.org/landscape/compost.htm
Also of interest is the Maine YardScape program
www.yardscaping.org/index.htm

What is Compost ?

Compost is a dark, crumbly and earthy-smelling material made up of decomposed organic matter such as food scraps, leaves, grass clippings and wood chips. Compost contains living organisms that require food, oxygen and water to survive.



Composting is our way of speeding up Mother Nature's decomposition process.

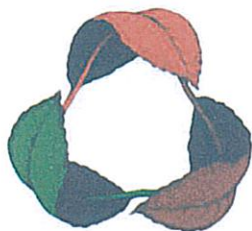
Passive vs. Active Composting

Passive composting is virtually labor-free. It requires a holding bin and takes between 8-12 months to get finished compost.

Active Composting requires more frequent turning and will produce compost much quicker than passive composting.

50:50 Brown to Green Ratio

It is important when composting to maintain a balance between carbon based materials (browns) and nitrogen based materials (greens).



Brown materials include: dried grass, autumn dried leaves, saw dust, wood chips (untreated wood), straw.

Green materials include: fruit & vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, tea bags, eggshells.

Why Compost ?

There are many benefits to composting. It is a simple and inexpensive way to dispose of and recycle food scraps and yard waste that would otherwise enter the waste stream. Compost also helps improve the health and quality of the soil that it is added to.

Composting:

- Reduces the volume of garbage
- Saves money on disposal costs
- Enriches and adds nutrients to the soil
- Improves soil structure for better root growth
- Increased moisture and nutrient retention
- Balances acid and alkalinity (pH) of the soil
- Suppresses disease and harmful pests
- Reduces the need for chemical fertilizers

DO Compost:

Any vegetable or fruit scraps
Eggshells
Coffee grounds and filters
Tea bag (remove staples)
Newspaper
Paper towels
Leaves and grass clippings.



DO NOT Compost:

Meat
Fish
Dairy products
Pet waste
Cat litter
Fats and oils
Diseased plants
Wood and charcoal ash
Grass clippings treated with herbicides
Non-organic material like plastic and metal.



How to Compost



1. Choose an area about 4 x 4 x 4 feet that is not in direct sunlight and is an easily accessible spot on grass or soil. Place the compost pile away from the house.
2. Start with a 6" layer of woody stalks at the bottom of the pile. Alternate 4" layers of brown material and 2" layers of green material. Add water as needed. The pile should be as wet as a wrung sponge. Continue to add food scraps year-round by burying them in the pile and providing more brown material as needed. See troubleshooting chart below.
3. Turn or stir the pile regularly to aerate.
4. The compost is ready when it looks dark and crumbly and starting ingredients are no longer visible.

Troubleshooting

| Problem | Solution |
|-------------------|---|
| Compost smells | Turn the pile and add browns |
| Too wet | Turn the pile and add dry material |
| Too dry | Turn the pile and add water, then shade |
| Cool to the touch | Add more greens |

Maine's Waste Management Hierarchy

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, **Compost**,
Waste-to-Energy, Landfill

WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT!