

COMPOSTING



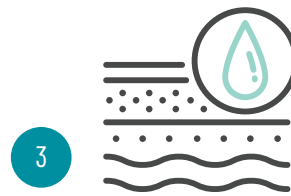
Why compost?



1 Over 50% of waste generated at home is organic matter, which can be recycled and used on your garden.



2 Composting is a cheap and easy way to reduce organic waste going to landfill, which reduces greenhouse gas production.



3 Compost returns vital nutrients to the soil, improves soil structure and keeps moisture in the soil.

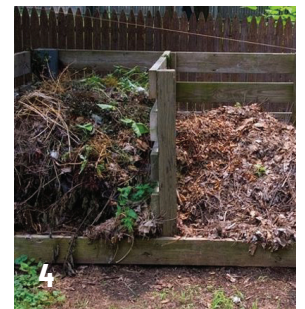


4 Composting is 100% natural and does not require any expensive artificial fertilisers.

Which composting system should I use?

There are a number of different compost systems available, so make sure you choose the one that will suit you best.

1. Compost bin – this is the most common type of compost system. Compost bins are sold in a range of sizes, making it easier to choose a bin that will suit the space you have available.
2. Tumblers – tumbler systems make aerating the compost easy. They create compost quickly, but can be quite expensive to purchase.
3. Compost heap – this a cheap and easy way to compost. Cover with hessian, carpet or cardboard and secure with some old bricks, as food in these set ups can attract vermin.
4. Holding bay and multi bay units – these can be made from old materials laying around and work best with at least two bays; one to break down and one for adding fresh garden waste. These are great for larger volumes of green waste such as leaves, prunings and grass clippings.



Learn the ADAM principles

ALIVENESS – a compost heap is a living system; it contains millions of microorganisms that act as natural decomposers.

DIVERSITY – keep the materials varied. Food scraps, grass clippings, newspaper, even hair and vacuum dust will create a healthy compost.

AERATION – your compost is alive, so it also needs air. Turn the heap every week or two with either a garden fork or compost turner. This helps maintain the oxygen in the pile and keeps it smelling sweet.

MOISTURE – a dry compost heap slows decomposition down, one that is too wet tends to be smelly. Your compost should be as moist as a damp sponge.

Build your compost in layers

Creating healthy compost is like making a cake - you need the right balance of ingredients!

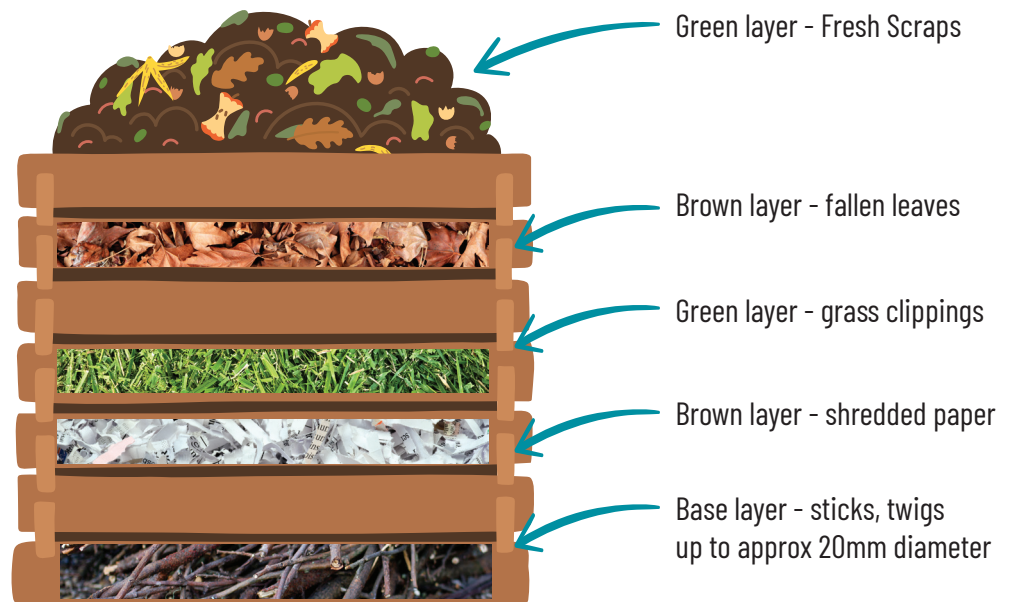
Alternate green and brown layers, keeping it well turned and aerated for best results.

To build compost, start with a thick layer (15cm) of twigs or coarse mulch at the base for drainage.

Then follow the brown and green layering steps:

1. Thin layer of greens
2. Cover with a layer of browns
3. Moistened well

Repeat the steps until you have used up all your organics.



The Greens - nitrogen

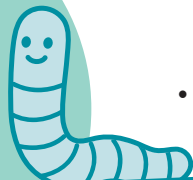
- Garden waste, grass clippings and leaves
- Flowers and weeds
- Fruits and vegetables
- Food scraps
- Egg shells
- Dairy products (once compost is well established)
- Bread and cereals (once compost is well established)
- Grass clippings

The Browns - carbon

- Hay and straw
- Damp cardboard and paper
- Sawdust (untreated)
- Small twigs
- Vacuum cleaner dust and hair
- Wood ash (untreated)
- Woodchips (untreated)
- Coffee grounds and tea leaves
- Dry leaves

Did you know?

Worms love compost and will help you to make a healthier compost!



What to avoid in your compost?

Avoid glossy magazines, waxed cardboard, diseased plants, dairy, meat and bones.

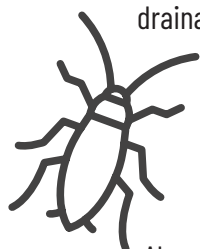
If adding manure make sure it is a vegetarian animal only – guinea pigs, rabbits, sheep or cows (NOT cat or dog droppings).

Something not right?

Smelly compost? This is usually caused by being too wet or not having enough air – it's an easy fix:



- Mix in dry leaves, saw dust, shredded paper or garden mulch.
- Add garden lime, dolomite or wood fire ash to reduce acidity.
- Turn the compost to add air.
- Give your compost heap a 'floor' of planks to ensure good drainage.



Unwelcome visitors and pests? Sometimes ants, cockroaches, mice or rats can make your compost their home. Try these tips to keep them away:

- Always cover food with a layer of garden vegetation or soil, then cover the heap with underfelt or hessian.
- Turn the compost to discourage ants and cockroaches.
- Fine wire under the compost bin or heap helps keep out mice and rats.
- Avoid adding meat, seafood and dairy to your compost.



Hints and tips

- Sprinkling soil or finished compost on top of food scraps will make a richer compost. It also gives the system a kick start of composting bugs, getting the composting process underway faster.
- If you are using a tumbler the layering arrangement won't apply, however the ratio of green to brown is still very important for a successful compost.
- Cover your heap so that it is just moist, not wet. If it is wet or saturated, mix more dry brown material through the compost and give it a turn to aerate.
- Use the lawn mower to chop up coarse garden prunings.
- Keep a bucket with a well-sealed lid on the kitchen bench to collect food scraps.

Did you know?

Composting turns trash into treasure!
(rich nutrients in your soil, giving you a healthy garden)