



Compost



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What is compost?

Compost is a mixture of rotting materials, like old vegetable peelings, leaves and manure that is used as a fertiliser for the garden. The composting process is made possible with the help of naturally occurring bacteria, fungi, and insects.

Why compost?

Waste is classified into either organic (having come from living plants and animals and their waste products) or inorganic (not derived from living organisms). Organic waste is food scraps, paper, grass clippings and other garden waste (green waste).

In New Zealand according to Our Auckland (our Auckland, Auckland district council 2019) over half of Aucklands rubbish bins contents are food

Even though food scraps are biodegradable (things that rot and go back into the earth), it won't rot in a landfill. People in the United States dug up landfills and found: Newspapers that were over 40 years old and still readable!



10-year-old carrots that were brown on the outside but orange on the inside!

20-year-old steaks with meat still on the bone!

The reality is that the conditions in landfills do not encourage rotting. And when the food is wrapped in plastic rotting is VERY slow and methane gas is produced which is warming up the planet.

The benefits of composting include the following:

Compost

- is a natural fertiliser which makes our fruit and vegetables grow faster and stronger.
- can reduce your food scraps going to landfill

- improves the water level in the soil so things grow faster
- improves the flavour of fruits and vegetables so they are yummy to eat

It also saves you money by less rubbish each week, and it gives you lovely fresh veges and fruit that are cheap to grow.

Methods of composting

There are many ways of building a compost. One of them is the traditional compost heap, which can be done in many different ways. Another way of dealing with food scraps is a worm farm. Both have their own advantages.



Composting the "traditional" way

There are a number of ways to produce compost, whether you use a compost tumbler or buy a bin, make a compost bin yourself (as pictured above) or have a simple heap, compost is made the same way. The only difference is some ways are quicker than others at turning the materials we put in into lovely dark brown compost.



To make compost you need three things:

Compost material + water + air

You can compost almost anything, including items such as cork, leather, and even denim jeans. However you are best to follow these simple rules:

Some things are not to be put in the compost as they attract pests, such as rats, and are likely to contain fat, which is not good for the compost.

You need to put layers of green and brown materials in your compost



Items to go in	NO leave out!
Vegetable and fruit scraps	Meat and bones
pruning's and lawn clippings	cooked food including bread, cakes and pasta these can attract rats
tea bags and coffee grounds	Cooking oil and dairy products like butter cheese and yoghurt
vacuum dust	Weeds with flowers or seeds, before you know it your compost and garden will be full of weeds
shredded paper and cardbaord	Dog, cat and human poo this can contain bad bacteria
Used potting mix	Magazines and shiny paper, these may contain chemicals and plastic
Crushed egg shells	Too much citrus, like oranges, limes and Lemons
flowers	Big tree branches, EVERYTHING that goes into the compost bin should be no bigger than the tip of your thumb or it will take ages to compost
Sawdust, but not from treated wood	Diseased plants
Straw	Weeds that grow from roots
hay	
Manure from cows or horses	When in doubt, leave it out!

Green materials are;

Garden Waste; weeds, no flowers or seeds
Green wood chopped small
Hay
Vege scraps
Egg shells coffee grounds
Food waste, but not the no no's already listed!
Grass clippings, green or brown they are still a green material!
Seaweed, horse poo
Cow poo, some people wee on their heap, but watch out the neighbours don't catch you!

Brown materials are;

Wood chips
Cardboard, shredded
Sawdust
Newspaper, shredded
Pine needles
Corn stalks
Straw
Dried brown leaves
Fruit waste
Peanut shells
Wood ashes

It is best to put twice as many browns into your compost to greens you can do this by putting 2 buckets of brown in and then 1 bucket of green.

But if you put an equal mix of 'green' (nitrogen) material and 'brown' (carbon) material in your compost, and making sure there is enough air and water, it's still likely to compost.

Water

Water is a critical compost ingredient. Without it, the compost won't break down, but with too much the compost can become smelly. Many of the ingredients added to the heap naturally contain water, such as grass clippings and kitchen waste. This is another reason why it is important to have the balance of green and brown ingredients (the browns will soak up some of that water). Compost should be as damp as a wrung-out sponge. If you take a handful from the centre of your compost and can squeeze just a few drops of moisture out, it's perfect!

Air

Compost should be turned regularly to allow air to circulate. This means taking the compost pile with a big garden fork and putting it into another pile, so it is mixed up and the air gets in.

The compost creatures

Every compost heap is home to a wide variety of compost creatures that range from microscopic bacteria and fungi, to insects such as worms, centipedes and beetles. These compost creatures are responsible for making our waste into the rich soil that we call compost.

Other considerations

It is best to place your bin slightly off the ground (on wooden slats or chicken wire), to ensure air from below. Keep it above bare soil (for access by microorganisms) and where it will get direct sunlight.

For health reasons, it is important to consider these health and safety tips:

- Wash your hands after handling compost.
- Protect broken skin by wearing gloves.

- Avoid handling compost in confined spaces.
- Keep compost moist to prevent spores or bacteria becoming airborne and inhaled.



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