



# Composting



## What can be composted?

This simple rule is that anything that was once alive can be composted. You want to avoid meat and dairy as this encourages vermin to your compost. In general, add two parts of brown to one part of green. When your compost looks like a loose soil, it is ready!

## Problems?

Below is a simple guide to solving problems you may have with your compost bin. Most problems can be solved by turning your compost and adding brown ingredients if its too soggy or adding wet ingredients if its too dry.

Green / wet / nitrogen rich	Brown / dry / carbon rich
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fruit and veggie scraps</li> <li>Tea leaves / coffee grounds</li> <li>Dead cut flowers</li> <li>Fresh grass clippings</li> <li>Kitchen scraps</li> <li>Manures</li> <li>Hair, skin , feathers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dry garden prunings</li> <li>Dry grass clippings</li> <li>Paper products</li> <li>Dry leaves</li> <li>Sawdust</li> <li>Straw</li> <li>Old cotton clothing (undies!)</li> </ul>
Activators	Don't add
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comfrey and yarrow</li> <li>Animal manure</li> <li>Blood and bone</li> <li>Old compost</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meat and bones</li> <li>Poultry and fish</li> <li>Dairy products</li> <li>Pet poo</li> </ul>

Problem	Cause	Solution
Smelly	Too much water or green ingredients, poor drainage or anaerobic (no air).	Add more brown material to absorb moisture and mix it well. Garden lime can be added for a quick fix.
Won't break down	Too dry.	Add water.
Pests <i>You will have lots of activity in your bin so don't panic about small vinegar flies, slaters, beetles, worms etc.</i>	Ants = too dry.	Add water and green ingredients.
	Flies and maggots = inappropriate ingredients.	Make sure the lid is secure and avoid meat and dairy items. Cover with a layer of soil and leave for two weeks to kill maggots.
	Cockroaches = too acidic, anaerobic.	Turn heap and add lime. Make sure your bin is buried.
	Rats / mice = inappropriate ingredients.	Secure fly screen to the base. Make sure the lid is secure and avoid meat and dairy items. Cover food scraps with a layer of soil.
Just not working	The balance is not right.	Make sure you have the mix of green and brown ingredients and enough water—think wrung out cloth wetness. Turn your heap. To speed up the process, add more green ingredients and activators.





# Composting



Composting turns food scraps and garden waste into a product that can improve soil quality, conserve water, recycle nutrients and reduce the need of artificial fertilizers.

There are many ways to make successful compost. You can use bins, tumblers or covered heaps. These instructions focus on bins.

## Getting your compost bin started

1. Choose a site that is shady in summer and has good drainage. Bury the bin 10cm into the soil. As an extra precaution to avoid mice, cover the base with fly screen before burying.
2. Add a layer of small twigs, egg cartons, dry leaves and / or torn up newspaper. This acts to aerate the compost.
3. Add activators such as animal manures, compost from an old heap, blood and bone and / or rich soil.
4. Add water.
5. Add a variety of materials in thin brown and green layers adding water and activators occasionally. Continue to add these items over time until your bin is full.
6. To aerate your compost and to speed up the process, turn your compost with a compost mate or pitch fork every couple of weeks or more if necessary.
7. Monitor the compost to make sure it is still active, not too dry or wet or attracting pests – see over for troubleshooting.

Compost bins can be purchased from gardening stores. Some Councils offer compost bins at a discounted rate! Earth Carers also run composting workshops throughout the year.

Thin layers of green and brown ingredients to 'feed' the compost

