

TROUBLESHOOTING:

Although composting is a fairly easy process, problems may arise from time to time. These problems will be minor and easy to correct. With just 15-30 minutes per week, you should be able to keep your pile in good condition. Listed below are some potential problems and what you need to do to correct them.

ODOR:

If your pile starts to smell like ammonia, you have added too many green materials. You can fix this by adding some leaves, or other brown materials, and giving the pile a good turn.

If your pile starts to smell rotten, it may be either too wet or too compacted. Again, the solution is to turn the pile and add some browns.

PESTS:

If it appears that critters are visiting your compost pile, you need to do a better job of covering up the food scraps. Also remember not to include meat, fish, poultry, or dairy products. These materials attract pests.

NOTHING'S HAPPENING!

If nothing seems to be happening in your pile, it can mean a couple of things. You might not be adding enough green materials. Another possibility is that your pile might be too small. It should be at least a cubic yard.

OTHER QUESTIONS:

Can I compost during the winter?

Sure. Just keep adding materials to the pile. Your pile will freeze and there won't be much decomposition taking place, but it will heat up again in the spring.

How long will it take to make compost?

It can take anywhere from a couple of months to over a year to get a finished product. It all depends on how much effort you want to put into your pile. You can speed up the process by paying close attention to the ratio of browns to greens, chopping up the materials, keeping the pile moist, and turning the pile frequently. If you don't want to be that involved in the maintenance of your pile, remember: compost happens—you will see a finished product in about a year or so.

For More Information on Backyard

Composting or Other Waste Management &

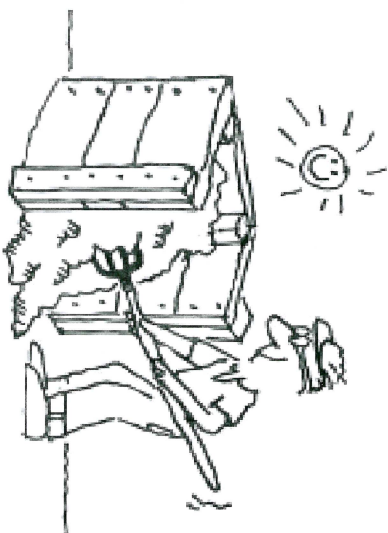
Recycling Issues, Please Contact:

The Cumberland Public Works Department
at 829-2220



TURNING SPOILS TO SOIL

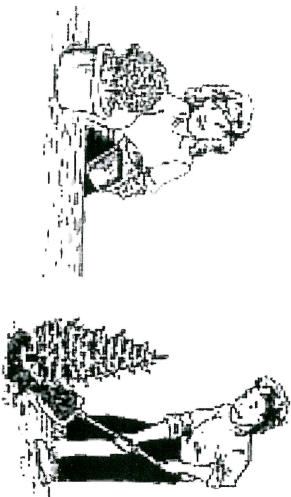
A Simple Guide to Backyard Composting:



Compost Happens!

Composting is a natural process that occurs everyday in nature. It is the process of organic materials decomposing, or breaking down. The process is carried out by microorganisms, worms and insects that eat the organic material.

When we compost in our backyards, we are simply speeding up what happens naturally by creating the ideal circumstances for decomposition to happen. We provide the bugs, worms and microorganisms with everything they need to survive: water, air, and the right materials to eat.



Why Should We Compost??

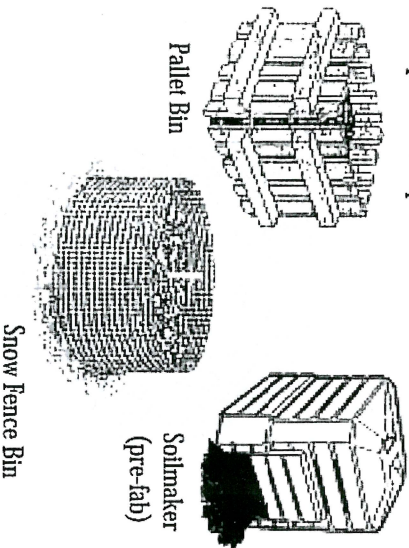
About 1/4 - 1/3 of the residential waste stream is compostable. Backyard composting is an easy way for you to recycle your food scraps and leaf & yard waste. This will help to preserve disposal capacity and reduce your town's solid waste costs.

The finished product, called compost or humus, is a nutrient-rich soil amendment that can be added to your garden. Compost will reduce the need for fertilizers, balance the pH and help the soil retain water.

Basic Steps of Composting

1. You can either use a compost bin or an open pile. Just make sure you pick a fairly level spot with good drainage and equal amounts of sun & shade.
2. Add both "greens" and "browns." The ratio should be about 4 parts "browns" to one part "greens." You need to start with a pretty big pile to get the process going. Make sure to cover any food scraps with leaves.
3. Keep the pile moist, but not sopping wet. The materials should feel like a wrung out sponge. If the materials get too wet, add some leaves to suck up the moisture.
4. Provide oxygen to the pile by turning it with a pitchfork, shovel, or aerator.
5. It's as easy as that! Just keep your pile moist and aerated and keep adding more materials (in the right ratio). Your pile should heat up as the materials start to decompose. For troubleshooting advice, see the back.

Examples of Compost Bins:



INGREDIENTS

YES!

The following can be composted easily in your backyard!

Greens

Grass

Vegetable & Fruit peelings

Egg Shells

Plant/Yard trimmings

Coffee Grounds & Tea Bags



Browns

Leaves

Hay/Straw

Sawdust/Woodchips

Napkins/Paper Towels



NO!

The following *cannot* be easily composted in your backyard:

Meat, Fish or Poultry

Dairy Products

Grease or Oily Foods

Diseased Plants

Pet feces