

*A Garden's Beauty Blossoms from the Soil*



# COMPOST



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*A Cooperative Sustainability Program of the Lincoln County Solid Waste District,  
the cities of Depoe Bay, Lincoln City, Newport,  
Siletz, Toledo, Waldport, and Yachats;  
Dahl Disposal Service,  
North Lincoln Sanitary Service,  
Thompson's Sanitary Service;  
and Lincoln County.*

# WHY COMPOST

Leaves, branches, fruits, vegetables and yard clippings do not need to be wasted. Instead, they can be composted into a rich garden soil amendment. Each year, composting helps our community divert significant tons of waste from being sent to the landfill.

Rather than throw nutrient-rich materials away, you can help make them into compost. Place yard debris and other organic items any one of these systems:

- Curbside Yard Debris Roll Cart**
- Curbside Mixed Compostables Roll Cart**
- Yard Debris Depot**
- Home Compost Pile**



# COMPOST BASICS

## *BUILDING HEALTHY SOILS*

Compost is a critical ingredient for healthy soil. Compost benefits soil structure and plant growth by:

- Adding organic material into the soil, increasing biological activity, and storing critical organic nutrients.
- Promoting healthy plant growth by loosening clay soils, promoting root development, and supporting beneficial organisms which help plants to thrive and resisting against weeds, disease, and insects.
- Enhancing the capacity of soils to retain more moisture, as well as reducing erosion and water run-off.

Healthy soil not only helps to reduce the need for fertilizers, pesticides, and water in a garden, it assists garden plants to resist against pests, drought, weeds and diseases. Composting can be an important part of keeping your yard and garden vibrant and productive.



## **APPLYING COMPOST**

*Compost works best as a soil amendment.  
Do not put plants directly into 100% compost.*

- Spread compost about ½ inch deep across a garden bed as a mulch/ground cover, keeping the compost on top of the soil; or
- Spread compost about 2 inches deep and then mix the compost down into the soil.

# HOW IT WORKS

Composting is a natural process that has been around since long before the dinosaurs. The Earth has teams of decomposers which constantly return organic nutrients back into the soil. A small pile of compost quickly becomes a miniature ecosystem with billions of microscopic organisms breaking down the materials. Depending on the conditions of the pile, such as the temperature and air flow, different teams of organisms begin to thrive.



Under the right conditions, a compost pile literally heats up from the activity of the microscopic organisms inside. The pile becomes hot and steamy. Under these conditions, organic material breaks down in a matter of weeks. In less optimal conditions, decomposition may take months or longer.

After a period of time, the nitrogen-rich fuel of compost becomes depleted, and the biological processes begin to slow. What was once a hot compost pile now begins to cool. After removing the bigger chunks, the leaves and banana peels are no longer distinguishable. Instead, the pile is made up of dark, twiggy compost. It has a crumbly texture and a mild, earthy odor. The compost process is coming to a rest. After a few weeks of aging, the compost is ready to be applied to the garden where it will serve as excellent nutrition for plants and help to build up healthy soil.



*Tip:  
In fall, freshly finished  
compost can be mixed  
directly into the soil to age  
over winter.*



## ***MAKING A QUALITY PRODUCT***

Whether you use curbside services, take materials to a depot, or compost at home, please keep in mind that what goes into the compost process, ends up in garden soils and ultimately in the plants we grow.

### ***Items to Never Place into any Compost Process***

- ⊘ Garbage
- ⊘ Plastics
- ⊘ Biodegradable Plastics
- ⊘ Rocks & Bricks
- ⊘ Glass
- ⊘ Pet feces

# **HOME COMPOSTERS ALSO BENEFIT FROM CURBSIDE SERVICES**

Using curbside mixed compostable recycling and curbside yard debris recycling collection services are a great way to keep the home compost piles free of unwanted materials.

Home composting is like any recipe – great things can be achieved when the right ingredients, time, and effort are used. Because home composting is done on a small scale, some common garden debris can become problematic if it gets into the mix. If not removed from the home compost pile, these items can cause odors, slow the processing down, or germinate unwanted plants in your garden. Fortunately, most of them are not a problem for commercial composting processes. Here is a short list of materials we recommend not be put into your home compost, but instead can be placed into a yard debris/mixed compostable recycling cart:



## ***Seed heads, Invasive Plant Species, and Weeds***

Many plant seeds and cuttings can survive through the entire process of a typically maintained home compost pile. The seeds and unwanted sprouts can then spread back into your garden with the finished home compost. By removing these undesirables—placing seed heads, invasive plants, weed roots, etc. into your roll cart— your home compost will sprout far fewer unwanted plants in next year’s garden. Commercial composting operates

at high temperatures and destroys almost all unwanted seed heads, so these materials are not a problem when they are placed into curbside programs.

### *Pumpkins*

There are a few garden items, such as pumpkins, that just smell bad when they decompose and may not be the best fit for all residential home compost piles. They are an example of an optional item to keep out of the home compost pile, especially if your compost pile is upwind of a neighbor's window. Pumpkins can go into commercial composting without issue, and hence can be placed into curbside programs.



### *Too many greens*

One dilemma of home composting is maintaining a proper mixture of greens (grass clippings and plant clippings) and browns (old sticks, dry brown grass, etc.). The ratio is about 1:4 (1 part green to 4 parts brown). Many home composters struggle with keeping enough browns to prevent issues. Having too heavy of a mix of greens, such as a large pile of only grass, can lead to some troublesome results and foul odors. The roll cart serves as an outlet for overages of excess greens.

### *Branches Larger Than A Thumb's Width*

For the home compost pile, larger branches need to be chipped, chopped, or shredded for them to successfully decompose in a timely manner. Commercial composting can handle branches without issue because they shred the



woody debris in commercial tub-grinders. The roll cart offers home composters a convenient outlet for branches up to 4” in diameter, which only need to be cut down in length to fit the cart and close the lid. This goes for holiday trees as well.

### *The Never List*

Below is short list of items that NEVER go into home compost\*:

- Meats, bones, and fats
- Dairy and buttery items
- Breads, pastas, and rice

*\* Thompson Sanitary Service and North Lincoln Sanitary customers may place meats, dairies, and breads into their Mixed Compostable Recycling Cart. The commercial compost process is set up to accept these items*

### *Lastly, Keep Plastic Out!*

Critical to the success of composting keeping all plastics out of it. Even so-called “Bio-Degradable” plastics may cause problems in compost.

Do not put plastics or use plastic bags in your home compost, and do not put any plastics into your mixed compostable roll, or yard debris roll cart. Current packaging products can have misleading or incorrect information. Never place plastics into compost.





# DIY HOME COMPOST

## *A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS*

A well maintained pile can turn organics into garden compost in as little as six to eight weeks. Preparation and tending are much more important than the type of bin used. Some effort in the form of chopping & turning is needed for successful compost pile.

### **Overview**

- Chop up **BROWNS** & **GREENS**
- Keep The Pile Moist (like a damp sponge)
- Turn The Pile Weekly To Aerate It
- Keep Pile Approximately 3' x 3' x 3'
- When Ready - Let It Rest For Several Weeks Before Putting It To Use

### **Ingredients**

4:1 Ratio **Browns** & **Greens**

- 4 Parts **BROWNS** - Sticks & Branches, Dried Leaves, Wood Shavings, Hay & Straw; and
- 1 Part **GREENS** - Grass Clippings, Fresh Flowers, Green Leaves, Fruits & Vegetable Scraps

## Basic Instructions

- **Chop Up *BROWNS* & *GREENS***

Each cut is an opportunity for micro-organisms to access the material and begin the decomposition process. The *GREENS* are nitrogen-rich and are the fuel of the compost process, while *BROWNS* are carbon-rich and act to stabilize the process. Optimally a compost pile will have about 4 times more browns than greens. .

- **Keep Compost Pile Moist**

The best conditions for decomposition come when the pile is constantly about the moisture of a wrung-out sponge. Water the pile when it gets dry and add dry browns if the pile gets soggy.

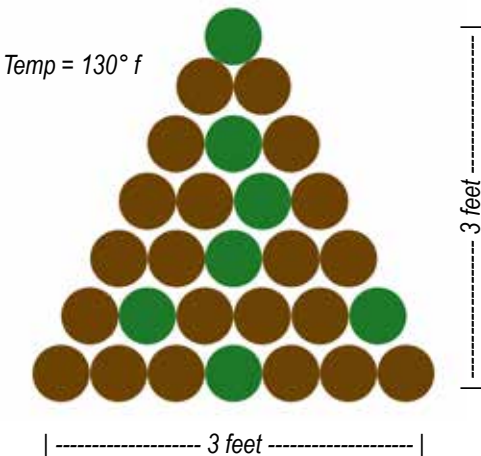
- **Turn Compost Pile Weekly To Aerate It**

The compost's ecosystem needs to breathe. Turning the pile will supply fresh air deep down into the compost for the tiny organisms.

- **Keep Compost Pile Approximately 3' x 3' x 3'**

The type of bin is less important than the size. A one cubic

yard pile is small enough to allow some air flow into the pile, while being just large enough to hold in some heat.



The optimum home compost pile will become hot—about 130°F in the center—for a week or more. This helps to destroy many weed seeds and pathogens. After several weeks the compost will no longer look like the material you put into the pile. Instead, it will look dark and crumbly with small twigs. In addition, the compost will have an earthy smell and no longer generate heat. This is a good indicator that the compost is then ready for the last step.



### ***Let the Compost Rest***

Allow time for the compost to age. Screen out larger pieces; chicken wire works well. Discontinue adding new organic material and start another pile for new material. Large screened items can be placed into the new compost pile. Place the nearly finished compost into a small pile and allow it to age for about six weeks. Aging allows the decomposition process to stabilize before introducing the compost into the soil. After aging, the compost is ready to apply to the garden.



# ***TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE***

## ***for a Home Compost Pile***

### ***FOUL ODORS***

- **An Ammonia-Like Odor** - Check if there may be too many GREENS. Add BROWNS and turn the pile thoroughly to correct.
- **A Rotten Odor** - If it has been a while since you last turned the pile, it may have gone anaerobic and not enough air is getting inside the pile. Turn the pile thoroughly to correct.
- **Just Smells Bad** - Ensure there are no meats, pet feces, dairy products, grease, cooking oils, or breads in the home compost pile. Also, composting pumpkins can cause an odor which some people may find offensive. To correct, remove offending items, add browns, and turn the pile thoroughly.

### ***PILE ATTRACTS ANIMALS OR PESTS***

- Ensure the pile is well maintained. Turning the pile thoroughly and frequently often reduces most issues with pests.
- Ensure the pile is not an attracting food source:
  - » Bury attracting items deep into the center of pile; or
  - » Add chicken wire to discourage animals or contain the material; or
  - » Remove attracting items from your home compost efforts

# **COMPOSTING PROCESS GOING SLOW**

*After several weeks the original pile seems unchanged*

- Check to see if the pile is too dry. To correct, water the pile regularly to keep the pile moist like a damp sponge.
- Check if there may be too many GREENS and if so, there may be an ammonia-like odor. Add BROWNS and turn the pile thoroughly to correct.
- If it has been a while since you last turned the pile, it may have a rotten odor. If so, the compost may not be getting oxygen inside the pile. Turn the pile thoroughly to correct..
- Check if the pile might be too small to hold heat. To correct, add GREENS and BROWNS to ensure the pile is around 3 feet high and 3 feet at the base.
- Check if the local weather has been too cold. To correct, you have the option to cover the pile during cold weather months to help insulate it or simply wait for warmer weather to start your compost pile.



# HAULERS & DEPOTS

*Please call ahead for rates and hours of operation. The materials are taken to a commercial compost facility for processing into compost.*

## **CURBSIDE MIXED COMPOSTABLE SERVICES**

Customers with curbside *Mixed Compostables Service* may place yard debris along with food waste (fruits & vegetables, meats & bones, and dairy products) into their roll cart.

### **NORTH LINCOLN SANITARY SERVICE**

(541) 994-5555

[www.northlincolnsanitary.com](http://www.northlincolnsanitary.com)

### **THOMPSON'S SANITARY SERVICE**

(541) 265-7249

[www.thompsonsanitary.com](http://www.thompsonsanitary.com)

## **CURBSIDE YARD DEBRIS SERVICES**

Customers with curbside *Yard Debris Service* may place fruits & vegetable scraps into their roll cart.

### **DAHL DISPOSAL SERVICE**

(541) 336-2932

[www.dahldisposalservice.com](http://www.dahldisposalservice.com)

## **SELF HAUL - YARD DEBRIS RECYCLING DEPOTS**

### **SCHOONER CREEK PUBLIC TRANSFER STATION**

(541) 994-5555

[www.northlincolnsanitary.com](http://www.northlincolnsanitary.com)

### **THOMPSON'S SANITARY TRANSFER STATION**

(541) 265-7249

[www.thompsonsanitary.com](http://www.thompsonsanitary.com)

### **DAHL DISPOSAL TRANSFER STATIONS**

(541) 336-2932

[www.dahldisposalservice.com](http://www.dahldisposalservice.com)

***Keep all plastic bags out  
of curbside recycling,  
mixed compostable,  
and yard debris containers!***

***Even “Bio-Degradable” plastics  
may cause problems in compost.***

***Never place  
any type of plastic bag  
(no matter what the label says)  
into local curbside yard debris or  
mixed compostable recycling containers.***

***At the curb, bio-degradable  
plastic bags, packaging, and utensils  
go into the trash.***