

Common Composting Problems

Compost Troubleshooting		
Symptom	Problem	Solution
Pile not Composting	Too dry	Add water until slightly damp and turn
	Too much "Brown"	Add fresh green matter and turn
Unpleasant Odor	Too wet	Turn pile and add more dry brown matter
	Too much nitrogen "Green"	Add more brown and turn pile
	Over compaction	Turn pile
Ammonia Odor	Overabundance of greens	Mix in browns turn pile
Pests: Flies and Other Animals	Attracted by food remains	Bury food remains in middle of pile
		Avoid meat scraps and fatty foods
Low Pile Temp	Insufficient aeration	Turn pile more frequently
	Too dry	Add water and mix in green matter

Benefits of Composting

- Suppress plant diseases & pests.
- Reduce or eliminate the need for chemical fertilizers.
- Promote higher yields of agricultural crops.
- Facilitate reforestation, wetlands restoration, and habitat revitalization efforts by amending contaminated, compacted, and marginal soils.
- Cost-effectively remediate soils contaminated by hazardous waste.
- Remove solids, oil, grease, and heavy metals from storm water runoff.
- Capture and destroy 99.6 percent of industrial volatile organic chemicals (VOCs) in contaminated air.
- Provide cost savings of at least 50 percent over conventional soil, water, & air pollution remediation technologies, where applicable.
 - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Why Not Put Yard Wastes in Landfills?

Since these materials are relatively clean and biodegradable, disposal in landfills may be unnecessary and wastes space.

In addition, as yard wastes decompose in landfills, they generate methane gas and acidic leachate. Methane is a colorless, explosive greenhouse gas that is released as bacteria decompose organic materials in landfills. If methane is not controlled at a landfill, it can seep underground and into nearby buildings, where it has the potential to explode. Yard wastes also contribute acidity that can make other waste constituents more mobile and therefore more toxic.

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Home Composting



Because It's Not Waste!



For Additional Information
Salt Lake County Recycling
Office: 385-468-6370

The Composting Process

Composting is a natural process that decomposes yard waste into a rich humus. This humus returns usable “plant friendly” organic matter & nutrients to the soil. Compost improves the water holding capacity, drainage, workability and aeration of existing soils.

Composting involves micro-organisms, earthworms, small insects, and small soil organisms which breakdown organic yard waste.

The composting process requires carbon, nitrogen, water and oxygen to effectively work.

The organisms which break down raw materials need carbon for energy and nitrogen for protein and other nutri-



ents. A byproduct of these organisms eating on the raw matter creates heat.

Organic wastes higher in carbon (Browns) are: Paper, sawdust, woodchips, straw and leaves/ dried brown vegetation.

Organic wastes high in nitrogen (Greens) are: Vegetable scraps, peelings, grass clippings, and farm manure.

An organic carbon to nitrogen ratio best for composting is (25-30:1). An example of this ratio is two parts fresh grass clippings to one part dried brown leaves.

Composting Methods

Food and Yard Trimming Methods

- *In-Vessel Composting*– An enclosed environment, with accurate temperature control and monitoring.
 - Great for people with limited space, apartment composting etc.
- *Open Piles & Simple Bins (most common composting method)*- a pile of alternating layers of green and brown waste that rapidly converts constituents into compost.
 - Requires “active” composting (chopping and weekly turning)



Food Waste Only Composting Method

- *Vermicomposting (Worm Bins)*- Use of red worms to convert organic waste into fertilizer.
 - Can be used as an Indoor and outdoor composting method
- *Closed-Air Systems*– Solid plastic containers, with tight-fitting lids, and open bottoms. It can also be accomplished by covering a compost pile with heavy black plastic and sealing it around the perimeter.
 - Low maintenance composting, prone to insects and odor problems
- *Underground/Trench Composting*– Dig a large hole or trench, fill with organic material cover and let decompose.
 - Time and labor intensive but no harvesting necessary

*Excess yard waste can be taken to the Salt Lake Valley Landfill

Start With The Basics!

1. Chop/Shred all materials put in your compost pile
2. Layer “browns” (dry woody materials) with “greens” (moist, green materials) 2 parts brown to every 1 part green
3. Retain moisture content (compost should be as moist as a rung out sponge) and temperature (110-140 degrees)

BROWNS, GREENS, WATER and AIR are the four key factors to making a healthy compost pile

Approximate Carbon-to-Nitrogen Ratios

(Ex: Food scraps have a Carbon:Nitrogen Ratio of 17:1, meaning 17 parts Carbon to 1 part Nitrogen)

Browns (High Carbon)		Greens (High Nitrogen)	
wood	800:1	coffee grounds	25:1
corn stalks	60:1	fruit scraps	30:1
straw	90:1	vegetable scraps	25:1
dry leaves	80:1	grass clippings	17:1
news-paper	175:1	garden waste	30:1
nut shells	35:1	manure	7:1

DO NOT ADD

meat, dairy, pet waste, plastic, glass, metal, fats, oil, grease