

Composting

Why Compost?

- An easy way to reduce the amount of household garbage by about one-third.
- Produces a valuable, high quality soil conditioner for use in gardening and landscaping.

Composting is a natural, biological process through which organic material is converted into a soil-like product called compost or humus. The process works with the help of microorganisms such as bacteria and fungi combined with air and moisture.



Niagara  Region

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The Natural Way for Niagara

Composting at home – benefits of a successful composting program

Composting diverts large proportion of household organic wastes from landfill sites – conserving landfill space and reducing production of leachate and methane gas – both of which add to the cost of operating a landfill.

Composting benefits soil and plants in many ways. It increases soil's organic matter content and its moisture-holding capacity. Compost improves soil porosity and helps to control soil erosion. It enhances plant and flower growth, and helps plants develop strong root structures.

Is compost a fertilizer?

Compost contains varying amounts of nutrients – nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. The concentration of these nutrients in compost is usually lower than those found in common fertilizers. Compost is more properly described as a soil amendment or conditioner that returns valuable organic material to the soil. Compost benefits the soil by improving soil structure, aeration and water retention.

Getting Started

Turn soil where composter will be located. After placing composter, cover floor of it with layer of small branches – allowing for air movement and drainage. Alternate wet (e.g., kitchen scraps), and dry (e.g., yard waste) materials. If available, add some “finished” compost, garden soil or compost starter (available at most garden centres) to the pile. This helps speed up the starting of the composting process.

Tips on Composting

- No thick layers of any one kind of waste.
- Turn or mix compost every few weeks or when new material is added – keeps compost well aerated.
- In winter, breakdown process slows down or stops when frozen, but restarts in spring. Turning in spring will reactivate pile. Empty composter in fall to make plenty of room.

Do Compost

- Grass clippings (not wet) up to 6 cm deep
- Leaves (chopped to speed their breakdown) up to 15 cm deep
- Plants and weeds (without ripe seeds), shred weeds/trimmings
- Food scraps, fruit scraps, vegetable trimmings (small pieces)
- Egg shells (crushed)
- Tea bags, coffee grounds with filters
- Manure, straw/hay
- Hair and lint
- Shredded paper

Don't Compost

- Grass clippings (wet)
- Weeds (gone-to-seed or invasive)
- Wood ashes, BBQ charcoal or lime
- Meat, fish or bones
- Fats, oils, grease or other sauces
- Dairy products, cheese
- Solid wastes (cat, dog, human)
- Plastic, metal, glass, contaminated matter
- Large amounts of soggy material, branches or wood