



## BACKYARD COMPOSTING

Earth Week is the perfect time for starting a backyard composting system! Food scraps are not trash but are instead a potentially valuable resource that can be turned into compost to improve the quality of garden soil. Here's a guide to start composting at home in 4 simple steps:

**1 THE COMPOST BIN:** Purchase a bin or build your own from welded wire, wood pallets, chicken wire, drums or trash cans. Place the bin in a shady spot in your yard that's convenient, has water access & good drainage. [Build your own](#)  [compost bin](#)



**2 LAYER GREENS & BROWNS:** Like any simple recipe, you'll get the best results if you use the right mix of key ingredients - nitrogen-rich "greens," carbon-rich "browns," water, & air. To build your pile, start with a layer of browns for the base, laying down 4 to 6 inches of browns on the bottom of the pile for good air circulation. Then alternate greens & browns in layers. Once you turn the pile the first time, these materials will get mixed together & compost more efficiently.

- 1) "Greens": coffee grounds; vegetables & fruits; egg shells; grass
- 2) "Browns": food soiled napkins & paper towels; newspapers; leaves; straw; yard debris
- 3) Keep these out of the bin to minimize odor & avoid unwanted visitors: food with meat, dairy, or oils; pet waste; diseased plants; weeds gone to seed



**3 WATER AS NEEDED:** Your compost pile should be moist, kind of like a wrung-out sponge. Squeeze a handful of compost. If small beads of water appear between your fingers, you have enough water. Your pile will get water from rain, as well as the moisture in the greens. If the pile gets too wet, you can turn it more frequently to dry it, or add more dry brown materials to soak up excess moisture.

**4 MIX IT UP:** Once you build your pile, the real composters - bacteria, fungi, & insects - get to work breaking down materials. Turning your pile each week with a spade or pitchfork aids decomposition & control odors. Look at the bottom of your pile for dark, crumbly & fresh-smelling compost. Add compost in growing beds, in planted areas as mulch or in potting media to enhance soil fertility. For more information & troubleshooting, visit "[Composting in Your Backyard.](#)"

