



ST. PETERSBURG'S COMPOSTING PROGRAM

WHAT IS COMPOSTING?

Composting is the natural process of recycling organic material, like kitchen and yard waste, which breaks down to form a usable, nutrient-rich fertilizer. Kitchen and yard waste together make up about 30% of what we throw away. Composting not only reduces the need for chemical fertilizer and enriches soil and helps suppress plants diseases and pests, but it also helps divert this waste from landfills. This reduction in landfill waste can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

WHERE TO PLACE COMPOSTING BIN

Place your composting bin in your backyard. You'll be adding kitchen waste several times per week, so place it in a spot that is convenient to get to. If you can, make it a spot that is dry and shaded (or only partially sunny) with access to water. Be mindful of your neighbors when choosing a location for your composting bin.

HOW TO COMPOST

To make compost, you need the essentials of life: food, water and oxygen. In this case, kitchen waste (greens) and yard waste (browns) are the foods you'll be putting into your compost bin.

Follow these steps for successful composting:

1. **CHOP:** Chop large pieces (watermelon rinds, corn cobs, etc.) into smaller pieces to speed up the composting process. Collect in a bin in the kitchen. A bin with a good seal is best to prevent fruit flies. You can line your container with newspaper, a paper towel or a coffee filter to keep material from sticking to the sides.
2. **EMPTY:** Empty your kitchen bin into the compost bin. If lined with paper, you can just slide out the lining along with the material you've added to the container. Newspaper and paper towels will compost well. This provides the nitrogen necessary for composting.
3. **STIR:** Mix the new kitchen scraps into the existing pile. Use a shovel, pitchfork, trowel or other garden tool for this task. Turning the pile adds the oxygen your pile needs.
4. **COVER:** Cover fresh food waste with dried leaves or other dry yard wastes. This is the carbon required for composting.
5. **WATER:** Make sure your pile stays moist, but not too moist. It should have about the moisture of a wrung-out sponge.
6. **WAIT:** Once you have green scraps and brown material mixed together with moisture, it will take time for the materials to break down and form compost.



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WHAT TO COMPOST

KITCHEN WASTE (GREENS)

- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Egg shells
- Coffee grounds and filters
- Grass clippings
- House plant clippings

YARD WASTE (BROWNS)

- Leaves and yard trimmings
- Nuts/shells
- Bread/grains
- Hair/fur
- Shredded black and white paper
- Shredded cardboard

WHAT NOT TO COMPOST

- Meat and bones
- Dairy (butter, milk, etc.)
- Eggs
- Fats, oils, lard and grease
- Pet waste
- Charcoal ashes
- Diseased plants
- Any hazardous material

HOW TO USE COMPOST

Creating good compost doesn't happen on a set timetable. Factors like temperature, how often you mix the material and moisture impact how fast your material breaks down into useable compost. You'll know it's ready when the soil is a dark, crumbly mixture that gives off an earthy aroma. For small harvesting, use the door at the base of the compost bin. For large harvesting, remove the plastic screws anchoring the bin to the ground and lift the container off the compost pile.

For the garden: add the compost to a vegetable or flower garden and work the material into the soil.

For your lawn: spread compost around your lawn to improve soil health.

For trees and shrubs: spread the compost around the base of trees and shrubs.

COMPOST TROUBLESHOOTING

PROBLEM	CAUSE → SOLUTION
Odor	Excess nitrogen → Add 'brown' material Lack of oxygen → Turn the pile
Pile is too cool (< 110°F)	Lack of nitrogen → Add 'green' material Lack of oxygen → Turn the pile Lack of moisture → Dampen the pile
Animal or insect pests	Too much food in the pile (meat, fat, eggs) → Omit animal products

REACH OUT

Contact composting@stpete.org or visit stpete.org/composting.

