

# Composting made easy!

Follow these simple steps to help conserve soil on our planet by composting food waste in your backyard. (adapted from CSWD [www.cswd.net](http://www.cswd.net))



**1. Collect materials** Check out the list of wet and dry materials that can be added to your compost pile. You should try to add equal quantities of wet and dry ingredients.



**Carbon (dry) leaves, hay, straw, wood ashes, shredded newspaper. Nitrogen (wet) grass clippings, manure, weeds, veggie and fruit scraps, coffee grounds, egg shells, tea bags.**

For a more complete list visit one of the websites below. DO NOT add any of the following: grease/oil, diseased plants, meat, bones, treated wood, dog/cat waste, fatty foods, large amounts of pine needles.

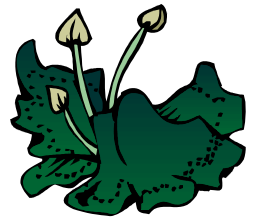
**2. Select a container** Whether you purchase a bin, make your own bin, or use no bin at all is your choice. Whatever you do, the pile should be at approximately 1 cubic yard (3 feet by 3 feet by 3 feet).



**3. Choose a location** Selecting a site for the pile is a balance between convenience and consideration. Although a well maintained compost pile should not generate odors or attract animals, we advise not placing it too close to outdoor living areas or property lines.

**4. Build the pile** The basic idea is to alternate wet and dry materials in layers approximately 4 inches thick just like layers in a cake! This will help create optimal conditions for the micro-organisms that decompose organic matter. To discourage insects, rodents, and other "vectors," be sure to bury food scraps near the center of the pile and cover with dry materials. Do not add meat, dairy products, or fatty foods.

**5. Let it cook** The micro-organisms, including bacteria, fungi, worms, and insects, will decompose the material in the compost pile. It takes TIME! The rate at which this process occurs depends on two main actors: AIR & WATER. Seasonal temperatures also affect the decomposition rate of small piles, the warmer the better.



**6. Harvest the compost** The compost is finished when it has a dark brown and an earthy smell. To remove any large chunks, sift the compost through a garden sieve or milk crate. The chunks can be placed back in the pile. Use the finished compost in your garden to add nutrient to the soil around plants. It can also be used to repot house plants, as a bedding for seedlings, or as mulch around trees and shrubs.

**Contact these Vermont organizations to find out more about backyard composting**

**Intervale Compost** <http://www.intervale.org/compost/>

**Chittenden Solid Waste Department** [www.cswd.net](http://www.cswd.net)

**National Gardening Association** [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org)

**U.S. EPA** [www.howtocompost.org](http://www.howtocompost.org)

**Vermont Master Composter sponsored by UVM Extension and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources** <http://www.uvm.edu/mastergardener/mastercomposter/>

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