

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem: The compost has a bad odour.

Cause: A well functioning compost pile should not produce a strong smell. An unpleasant odour can be caused by a lack of oxygen or insufficient carbon.

SOLUTION: Turn the pile to increase aeration or add carbon-rich materials such as dry leaves, straw, or shredded newspaper.

Problem: The compost is damp and warm in the middle but nowhere else.

Cause: The pile is likely too small.

SOLUTION: Collect more material and mix the old with the new.

Problem: The centre of the pile is dry.

Cause: Pile lacks water, or mixing is required.

SOLUTION: Turn materials from sides to centre. Add water if required.

Problem: The pile is damp and sweet smelling but won't heat up.

Cause: Lack of nitrogen.

SOLUTION: Mix in nitrogen-rich material such as fresh grass clippings or vegetable scraps.

WHERE TO TAKE

EXCESS YARD WASTE (fees apply):

Regional Landfill

1105 Cedar Road, Nanaimo, (250) 722-2044

Church Road Transfer Station

860 Church Road, Parksville (250) 248-5254

Nanaimo Recycling Exchange

2477 Kenworth Road, Nanaimo (250) 758-7777

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Visit the RDN Solid Waste Department website at www.rdn.bc.ca for composting resources.
- See the RDN brochures on Grasscycling and Worm Composting.
- Contact the RDN Solid Waste Department at 250-390-6560 (Nanaimo area) or 250-954-3792 (Parksville-Qualicum area).



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COMPOSTING



Sustain the land,
save landfill space

What is home composting?

How to get started....

Why compost?

Organic material, such as yard and garden waste, food scraps and soiled paper products, represents over half our region's household waste.

Composting is an environmentally sound way to turn this waste into a useful resource.

The Regional District of Nanaimo has identified composting as a key component in reaching its long term Zero Waste goal to eliminate garbage, reduce greenhouse gases and create a more sustainable region.

Promotion and education has encouraged many of the region's households to backyard compost. Extending the region's successful curbside food waste collection pilot project will complement backyard composting by accepting organic materials unsuitable for composting at home.

What is composting?

Composting is nature's way of recycling organic waste from your yard and kitchen by breaking it down into soil-enriching humus.

Home composting is easy. Special knowledge or equipment isn't required, just a little extra effort is needed to collect your yard and kitchen waste and start an active compost pile. Once you've got it going, it's a matter of letting nature take its course with a little help along the way.

What are the benefits?

- Turns yard and garden waste and vegetable and fruit scraps into a valuable soil amendment.
- Reduces the amount of garbage you take to the curb and the amount of yard waste requiring disposal.
- Extends the life of the region's only landfill.

How does composting work?

In nature, organic wastes are broken down and recycled through a combination of biological and chemical processes. Biological agents like worms, insects, fungi, bacteria and other microorganisms consume and digest the materials releasing nutrients in the process. The humus which is produced is further transformed by the weathering process.

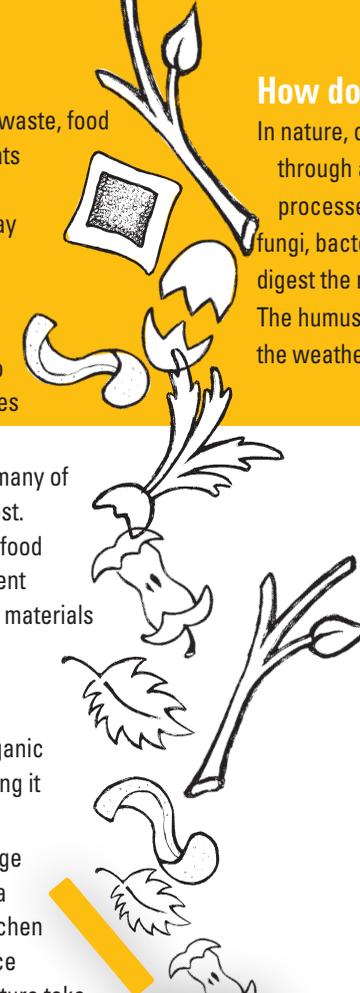
What Can I Backyard Compost?

YES

Coffee grounds
Egg shells
Grass clippings
Leaves
Plant cuttings
Tea and tea bags
Vegetable and fruit peelings
Sawdust
Wood ash

NO

Bones
Cooking oils
Dairy products
Meat or fish
Pet feces
Salad dressings
Weeds that have gone to seed
Diseased plants or leaves
Avocado, peach and other pits



compost
bin



soil enriched with compost

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DISTRICT
OF NANAIMO

What's in a good composting recipe?

For successful composting, you need:

The right green-brown mix, including

- Nitrogen-rich greens such as fresh grass clippings, plant trimmings and vegetable scraps.
- Carbon-rich brown materials such as dry leaves, straw, sawdust and shredded newspaper.
- Roughly equal amounts of green and brown materials for a steady rate of decomposition and a good nutrient value of the finished compost.

Air and moisture

- The right amount of air and water keeps the biological processes working. The pile should be damp but not soggy.
- Turn your compost every week or two to ensure bacteria get the air they need to do their work.

Heat

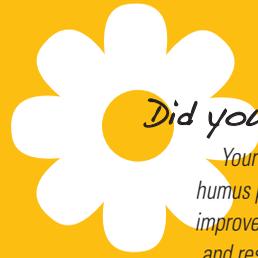
- The greater the heat the faster your compost will "cook". In cooler weather, the process will slow and may limit how much material you can add.
- Keeping your compost pile at a size of 1 square metre, ensuring the right mix of browns and greens, and regularly turning will turn up the heat.

What composting system is best for me?

All that's needed to compost is a little space. About a square metre of space will do.

Plastic Bins

Purchasing a plastic backyard bin available in kit form at many local hardware and home supply stores is one of the easiest ways to start composting. Call the RDN Solid Waste Department or visit the Composting section of the RDN Solid Waste website for a list of retailers in the region.



Did you know?

Your garden and lawn will benefit from the humus produced by composting. Adding compost improves clay and sandy soils, helps retain water and restores nutrients. Your flowers, plants and vegetables will thrive!

Compost heaps

If you have the room, a compost heap is one of the best ways to compost large volumes of yard and garden waste. The heap is created by piling leaves and yard and garden trimmings directly on the ground. The size of the pile and thickness of materials will determine how much heat is generated and how quickly materials decompose.

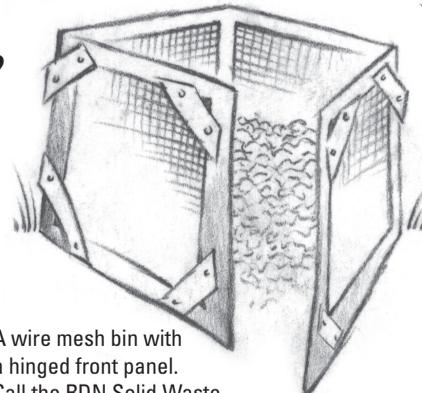
Build your own

Building your own composter will allow you to design a unit to suit your needs and budget. They can be made of wood, concrete blocks, tires or wire mesh. Here are four common features:

- A cover to control the moisture that gets in;
- A floor to inhibit rodents and pests;
- Holes or vents for air circulation; and
- A means of removing the final product.

Where should I site my composter?

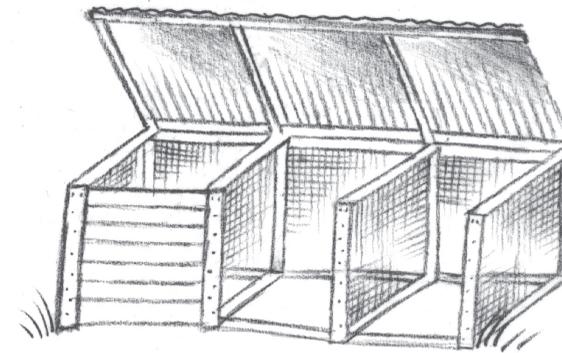
Try to put your composter in a sunny, well-drained location, preferably near your garden. Sunlight will help heat up your compost, making it decompose faster.



A wire mesh bin with a hinged front panel. Call the RDN Solid Waste Department or visit its website for composter designs.

How to get started and what to notice

- Add organic material in layers, finishing with a brown covering or handful of garden soil. Soil contains microorganisms that accelerate the process and controls odours. Keep the pile as moist as a wrung out sponge.
- Turn the pile or poke holes to expose more material to the air and speed the composting process. If you have difficulty stirring or turning the pile, commercially available tools can help with increasing aeration.
- If conditions are right, the compost pile will heat up and even feel hot to the touch. As the biological processes slow down, the pile will cool as it completes its work.
- When the composting process is done, you'll have dark, rich, soil-like humus with a good earthy smell. Your finished compost should have a deep brown colour. If it appears black, the pile may have reached too high a temperature and actually been scorched.



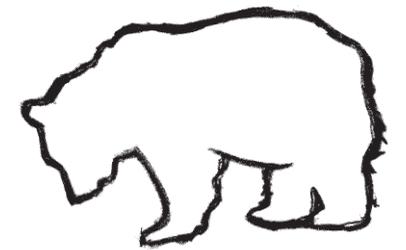
For more advanced enthusiasts, a multi-compartment unit can be used to manage compost at different stages: raw materials, active piles and finished product.

Did you know?

Worms, millipedes, centipedes, sowbugs, snails, slugs and beetles and ants are all welcome visitors to your compost pile. They play an important role in decomposing the material.

Helpful hints

- Be patient. Different materials decompose at different rates, but all will break down eventually. To speed things up, shred or chop large pieces.
- Prevent wet leaves and grass clipping from clumping together by allowing them to dry before adding to your compost pile. Adding small amounts of green materials at a time and mixing them with brown dry materials will help.
- When Fall comes store a few large bags of leaves. This will ensure you have a ready source of carbon-rich material for your compost pile.
- The composting process will slow during the winter months, but you can keep adding new materials.
- Apply your finished compost by mixing it into your soil and spreading evenly throughout your garden.



Be bear aware

Maintain your compost pile or bin to keep it from attracting bears and other wildlife. Don't add cooked foods, bread, fruit, cereal. Sprinkling your compost with garden lime aids the composting process and reduces odours that might attract bears or wildlife.

For more information on bears and bear safety, visit the Bear Aware website at www.bearaware.bc.ca or visit the BC Ministry of Environment - Bear Smart Community website.