

Composting at Home

Like many around the world, you and your family may be looking for new projects around the house to occupy your time. Starting and maintaining a composting system can be a fun and easy way to engage your household in an ongoing activity that's good for the planet. The average American throws away about 4.5 pounds of waste every single day. It's estimated that food scraps and yard waste make up about 28% of what we dispose of. Composting is a great way to put those fruit and vegetable scraps as well as sticks, leaves, and grass clippings to good use!

The first step to a successful composting system is establishing containers for indoor collection and outdoor mixing. You'll need a container inside the house to collect fruit and vegetable scraps from your kitchen and an area outside to deposit the materials--where the composting magic happens. There are many options for containers, which may be items you already have. Remember that your composting system doesn't have to be expensive or fancy and should be convenient and work for you.

Indoor collection options can range from simple and free to beautiful and expensive. If you're into reusing, consider a clean and empty yogurt or ice cream tub or a large plastic food storage container with a lid to collect fruit and vegetable scraps in the kitchen. If design and aesthetics are more your scene, there are many containers available online that may fit nicely on your countertop, such as stainless steel and ceramic urns. If you're concerned about odors, making space in the freezer for your compost tub is a simple solution.

Finding the right outdoor mixing bin doesn't have to break the bank either. You can create your own from an item you may already have, such as this [compost bin](#) made from a trash can or purchase a variety of composters, like a tumbler with handles that aid with mixing. Some yards work well with a simple compost pile, structured with chicken wire, repurposed pallets, or lumber. Regardless of what you choose for your outdoor container, remember to have an equal mix of "greens" and "browns".

Step two is to collect "greens", nitrogen-rich materials often collected in the kitchen, such as fruit and vegetable peels, cores, stems and seeds as well as coffee grounds and grass clippings from the yard. "Browns" are carbon-rich materials such as dried leaves, twigs, branches and shredded paper.

The third step is to deposit equal amounts of "greens" and "browns" into the outdoor container.

Step four is to mix together materials by using a pitchfork, shovel, or tumbling. Add water if needed so that mixture is moist but not soaking wet. Often times with moisture-rich fruit and veggie scraps, it's not necessary to add water. Ensure that you're mixing materials regularly to circulate oxygen throughout the pile and encourage microbes to do their job breaking down the materials into useable compost.

The final product may be ready in as soon as three months' time. However, this process may take longer, depending on your system. Once the material is a rich brown color and resembles soil where individual items cannot be detected, apply evenly to garden beds and potted plants.

Adding compost to your soil will help provide a variety of necessary nutrients and beneficial bacteria to help your plants grow. Compost also helps to retain water in the soil, cutting down on the amount of added water needed, as well as suppressing weeds.

Don't have a yard but want to reduce your waste? No problem! Here's a [great guide](#) to creating an indoor worm composting bin.

Acceptable items for the compost bin include:

- ✓ Fruit and vegetable peels, cores, stems and seed
- ✓ Bread, grains and starches
- ✓ Coffee grounds, filters and tea bags
- ✓ Nut shells and crushed egg shells
- ✓ Dried leaves, twigs and grass clippings
- ✓ Paper towels and shredded paper

Items that should not go into the compost bin include:

- X Meat and dairy products
- X Cooking oils
- X Plastic
- X Pet waste/pet litter
- X Bones
- X Produce stickers

[Composting at Home Video](#)