



BUILDING A GREENER LIFESTYLE FOR FREDERICK COUNTY

Composting: *Do the Rot Thing*

RESOURCES:

- **Frederick County Government Office of Recycling**
9031 Reichs Ford Road
Frederick, MD 21701
301-694-1848, 301-696-2960
www.co.frederick.md.us/Recycling/
- **Demonstration Center at the Frederick County Landfill**
- **United States Environmental Protection Agency**
www.epa.gov
1-800-490-9198
- **City of Toronto**
has a comprehensive composting website at www.city.toronto.on.ca/compost/index.htm

WHY COMPOST?

Composting food and yard scraps is a great way to make inexpensive, high quality fertilizer for lawn and garden. It also reduces the volume of the garbage stream entering our municipal waste facilities.

In 2001, US residents, institutions, and businesses produced more than 229 million tons of garbage. That amounts to about 4.4 pounds per person per day (up from 2.7 pounds per person per day in 1960)! Of this, 12.2 percent was yard trimmings and 11.4 percent was food scraps. **That's almost 25 percent of landfill mass that could be composted.**

Adding compost to soil improves the structure, texture, and aeration. Plants grown in compost are stronger and more resistant to disease and insects and, therefore, require less insecticide. Healthy soil absorbs and filters runoff, protecting streams from erosion and pollution.



A simple compost bin made of cement blocks.

COMPOSTING METHODS

If possible, locate the compost pile in a partially shaded spot. Choose a site that is convenient - has easy access from the kitchen, good drainage, and available water. When building a pile, start with a brown layer (see chart on page two). Always bury food scraps in the pile or top them with another compostable material.

• Heap

The simplest method of composting is to pile the materials on top of each other directly on the ground.

• Bin

The ideal size for a compost bin is 1 cubic yard (3 x 3 x 3 feet). Wood bins can be made from four used shipping pallets that are tied together with wire. A fifth pallet can be used as a floor to provide better air circulation to the pile.

A wire bin can easily be made from making a circular loop out of fencing or chicken wire. Simply pick up the bin and allow the compost to fall through the open bottom. Place the bin next to its last location and fork the top of the pile into the bottom of the new location.

There are also several types of composting bins and tumblers commercially available.



Commercially available bins are easy to set up.

ELEMENTS OF COMPOST

Raw Material

OK	NO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit and vegetable scraps • Egg shells • Coffee grounds and filters • Tea bags • Leaves • Grass • Yard clippings • Lint • Fresh garden trimmings, flowers, and plant leaves • Barnyard manure (horse, cow, chicken) • Shredded paper, cardboard, paper towels, napkins or tissues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meat • Dairy products • Oil or grease • Pet waste • Fish scraps • Diseased plants • Bones • Sawdust from plywood, treated or painted wood • Clippings recently treated with herbicides or pesticides • Insect-infested plants • Cooked vegetables and fruit
Browns (Carbon)	Greens (Nitrogen)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaves • Straw • Woody Materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grass • Food Scraps



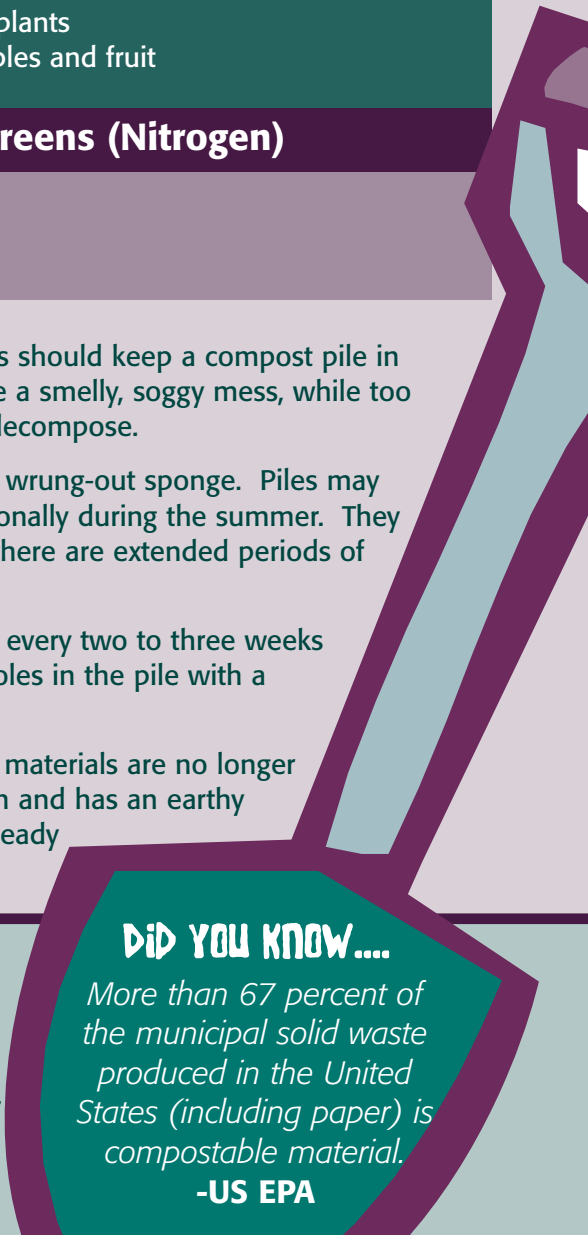
This attractive bin allows air to flow through the pile and easy access with a hinged door.

An equal amount of greens and browns should keep a compost pile in balance. Too many greens will produce a smelly, soggy mess, while too many browns will take a long time to decompose.

Compost piles should be as damp as a wrung-out sponge. Piles may need to be sprinkled with water occasionally during the summer. They may need to be covered with a tarp if there are extended periods of wet weather.

For quicker composting, aerate the pile every two to three weeks by turning with a pitchfork or poking holes in the pile with a broom handle.

Compost is ready to use when the raw materials are no longer visible. Finished compost is dark brown and has an earthy smell. The bottom of the pile may be ready before the top.



DID YOU KNOW....

More than 67 percent of the municipal solid waste produced in the United States (including paper) is compostable material.

-US EPA

MIKRO- AND MACRO- ORGANISMS

Macroorganisms include earthworms, sow bugs, and other insects. Microorganisms include bacteria, fungi, and enzymes. These elements will come to your pile naturally as long as the pile is not located on concrete or a paved surface. Place your bin on the ground so organisms can colonize the compost pile.

The Building a Greener Lifestyle series is a public outreach component of the Frederick County WRAS (Watershed Restoration Action Strategy), an alliance of diverse stakeholders interested in improving water quality and wildlife habitat in the Monocacy and Catoctin Watersheds. Community Commons coordinated the series to empower citizens to take action in their own homes and yards towards improving water quality. More information about the WRAS can be found at www.co.frederick.md.us/cleanstreams or by calling 301.694.1741. Community Commons can be reached at 301.662.3000 or at www.communitycommons.org.



Community Commons

