

WHAT TO USE

COVERED HEAP

A covered heap is useful for large quantities of compost. Enclose the heap using bricks or timber. The best dimensions are between 1-2 metres wide and 1 metre high. Leave an access area at the front of the heap for turning the compost and cover it with a piece of carpet or hessian bags. These allow airflow, prevent excess drying and keep pests out. Two heaps will allow material to mature in one while composting in the other.

COMPOST BIN

Compost bins are better for smaller suburban gardens. Plastic bins can be purchased from nurseries, hardware stores and local Councils. They are open at the bottom with the top requiring a tight-fitting lid. Holes in the sides will assist aeration – not in the top – so you can control the amount of moisture. Place the bin in the ground in a sunny position. Two bins will allow material to mature in one while composting in the other.

COMPOST TUMBLER

Compost tumblers are better for smaller gardens but are more expensive. They consist of a barrel which is held off the ground to enable it to be turned for aeration. With the increased aeration they often produce compost quicker than other methods. They are also less likely to have rodents and fly problems as they are fully enclosed apart from vents which allow air in.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Visit the Rivers Regional Council website:
www.rrc.wa.gov.au

or

Visit the ZeroWaste WA website:
www.zerowastewa.com.au

Printed on Recycled paper

TROUBLESHOOTING

COMPOST BIN SMELLS	PROBLEM Compost pile is too wet or is not receiving enough air. SOLUTION Turn the compost. If it is too wet mix in some brown material such as dry leaves or shredded garden organics.
BIN CONTENTS HAVE TURNED SLIMY	PROBLEM Too much green material added. Poor structure results in inadequate aeration and may produce odour. SOLUTION Add brown materials e.g. dry leaves. Reduce amount of green material added. Turn the compost.
CENTRE OF PILE IS DRY	PROBLEM: Not enough water. SOLUTION Add water or green material. Mix well and turn compost.
PESTS	PROBLEM: Acidic and smelly heap due to too much green material or food scraps are left exposed on top of the pile. SOLUTION Ensure scraps are covered when added. Add garden lime and brown material and turn the heap.



Composting

Helping create a zero waste environment



WHAT IS COMPOSTING?

Home composting is a simple process where naturally occurring bacteria and fungi breakdown organic matter - such as food scraps and garden organics - into a nutrient rich soil-like material that can be used to create and maintain a healthy and sustainable garden that requires less water.

Compost is best dug into the ground where it provides the greatest benefit to plants.

WHAT CAN BE COMPOSTED?

YES

- ✓ Vegetable and fruit scraps
- ✓ Tea leaves & tea bags
- ✓ Coffee grounds
- ✓ Crushed egg shells
- ✓ Paper & cardboard (shredded)
- ✓ Leaves and twigs



NO

- ✗ Animal droppings
- ✗ Meat products
- ✗ Fish
- ✗ Nappies
- ✗ Plastic
- ✗ Glass
- ✗ Metal



CARE FOR YOUR HEALTH

When handling compost it is important to wear gloves and a mask to avoid contact with spores and bacteria.



FOUR EASY STEPS

1) FIND A LOCATION

The compost heap/bin should be placed directly onto the soil in a sunny spot.

2) ADD STARTING MATERIALS

Start with a good layer of woody or nutrient poor ('brown') materials such as leaves or shredded garden organics on the very bottom of the heap/bin. Then place alternate layers of food scraps ('greens') and grass clippings with shallow layers of leaves or shredded garden organics. Add water if the composting material is dry.



3) MAINTAIN

Keep the heap/bin moist but not too wet. When adding food scraps, place them at the centre of the heap/bin where the temperature is the highest. This also helps to keep out pests. Turn the compost about once a fortnight to increase aeration and speed up the process.

4) HARVEST - IS MY COMPOST READY FOR USE?

Home compost should be ready in about 12 weeks and will be visibly different from commercially produced compost. Sieve out any undecomposed parts. Fluff up any wet compacted compost with a garden fork to separate it into a crumbly texture ready for use.

Signs of mature compost are:

- It smells earthy - not sour, putrid or like ammonia
- It has a dark brown texture which looks like soil
- It's crumbly, and doesn't have identifiable food items, leaves or grass.

COMPOST PRINCIPLES

Essential components of a healthy compost are: **air, food (balanced materials), moisture and temperature.**

FOOD (BALANCED MATERIALS)

Carbon based 'browns' provide structure. These materials are drier, fibrous and include paper, cardboard and woody prunings.

Nitrogen based 'greens' provide moisture and nitrogen. These are soft, moist and include most food scraps, grass clippings and weeds.

WATER

A compost heap should contain 40-60% moisture with material feeling as damp as a wrung out sponge.

AIR

Air gaps in the material are essential to prevent low oxygen (anaerobic) conditions, which causes unpleasant smells.

TEMPERATURE

'Hot' compost is best. In the 'active' phase, 2 types of microorganisms, mesophilic and thermophilic bacteria, push the temperature up to over 50°C as they break down the organic matter. Seeds and pathogens are killed at these temperatures.

This is followed by the 'cooling' and 'maturation' phases where material continues to degrade at cooler temperatures. It is important to allow the compost to mature over about 30 days.

The volume of material can reduce by up to 50% of the original material.

