

How to Compost



Composting is a cheap, easy and natural way to improve the quality of soil in your garden and divert organic waste from landfill. Over half of what gets thrown into the bin is food scraps and garden trimmings. By composting your food scraps, you are helping to reduce landfill and greenhouse gas emissions.



What do I need?

A **compost bin**, **aerator** and some **compost ingredients** are all you need to make compost. A simple, round bin that opens at the bottom and sits on the ground is ideal for everyday kitchen scraps and garden trimmings.



Compost Ingredients

Nitrogen rich: green/wet: Fruit and veggie kitchen scraps; tea leaves and bags; coffee grounds; cut flowers; grass clippings; manures.

Carbon rich: brown/dry: garden trimmings (not woody branches); paper products; dry leaves; sawdust; straw.

Activators: Comfrey and yarrow; animal manures (*not* dog or cat poo); blood and bone; made compost.

✓ **Yes, you can add:** onion; citrus; egg shells; teabags; small amounts of plate scrapings (pasta, bread, cheese meat); eucalyptus leaves; dog and human hair; nail cuttings; natural fibres; ripped newspaper and office paper.

✗ **Don't add** large amounts of meat; bones; poultry; fish or dairy products. **Never add cat or dog poo.**

Anything that once lived can be composted; however, to get started the items suggested here are a good guide. **As a rough guide add two thirds kitchen scraps to one third carbon ingredients.**

Setting up your Compost Bin

- 1** It is essential to choose a shady site because worms and most compost microbes will die if the bin contents dry out or get too hot.
- 2** Make sure the bin is easy to access from your kitchen.
- 3** Dig the bin into the ground to at least 10cm. This deters unwanted visitors like rodents and cockroaches. *Tip: Cover the base with mouse mesh.*
- 4** Add a layer of small twigs, egg cartons and/or dry leaves. This acts to aerate the compost.
- 5** Add activators such as comfrey and yarrow, animal manures (not dog or cat poo), compost from an old heap, blood and bone.
- 6** Lightly spray with water.



Your bin is now ready to use on a daily basis for most kitchen scraps and garden trimmings. **Remember the ratio: two thirds kitchen scraps to one third carbon ingredients.** Add a diversity of ingredients for richer compost and to keep a balanced pH level. When your bin is one third full, turn your compost with a compost mate and repeat every couple of weeks. This aerates the compost to keep it smelling sweet and speeds up the process.



Don't panic! The finished product may not look like commercial compost. Different materials will compost at a different rate, some chunks and eggshells in your compost is fine – your garden won't mind!

Troubleshooting

Smelly compost:

caused by too much water or green ingredients.

Solution:

For a quick fix, add garden lime, dry material and turn contents. In general, use more brown material to absorb moisture. As a last resort, empty your bin and refill using layers of green and brown ingredients.

Pests:

Ants: are attracted to a dry bin where the base has not been dug in / not closed properly. **Solution:** Add water and green ingredients.

Cockroaches – too acidic, anaerobic (no air), bin. **Solution** Add lime and turn contents.

Rats / mice - inappropriate ingredients, bin not closed or buried sufficiently. **Solution** Secure mouse mesh to base. Make sure that it's secure and avoid meat and dairy items. Cover food scraps with a layer of soil.

Expect to see lots of activity in your bin. Small vinegar flies, slaters, beetles, worms, etc. are meant to be there.

Just not working: The balance is not right. **Solution:** Make sure you have a mix of green and brown ingredients and enough water – think wrung out cloth wetness. Turn your heap. To speed up the process, add more green ingredients and activators.