

# Composting Fact sheet

Composting is a natural recycling process that turns organic matter into a soil-like material called 'compost'.

## Why compost?

- ✓ **Improve soil health, structure and the ability to retain water**
- ✓ **Reduce the need for artificial fertilisers and pesticides**
- ✓ **Reduce waste sent to landfill**
- ✓ **Reduce greenhouse gas emissions**
- ✓ **Composting is fun, easy and saves money!**

## It's easy to set-up, maintain and grow...

1. Decide on a system that works for you. Compost bins come in all shapes and sizes, or you can build your own.  
 Choose a sunny location outside on the dirt or grass.  
 Add a layer of twigs at the base and the right ingredients to your compost and build it layer by layer, using the ADAM principles below.

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2. Follow the **ADAM** principle:
  - Aliveness:** Compost is a living system that requires bacteria, microbes, fungi and other critters to eat the organic waste and turn it into nutrient-rich soil.
  - Diversity:** add a mix of 'brown' and 'green' materials (see over page).
  - Aeration:** mix the compost once a week, to speed up the process and reduce odours.
  - Moisture:** keep the pile at a consistency of a wrung-out sponge. During summer add in water or moisture rich materials.

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3. Compost will be ready when it looks rich, dark and crumbly – this can take anywhere from 4 - 12 weeks. Scrape away non-decomposed materials and place to the side. Add the finished compost to your garden.  
 Start the cycle again, placing non-decomposed materials back in the bin.





## What can go into the Compost bin?

### Green materials (nitrogen rich):

- ✓ Fruit and vegetable scraps, including small amounts of citrus and onion
- ✓ Garden prunings and grass clippings
- ✓ Flowers and weeds
- ✓ Tea leaves, tea bags and coffee grounds
- ✓ Small quantities of bread, rice and pasta (may attract rats)
- ✓ Manure and Blood and Bone

### Brown materials (carbon rich):

- ✓ Dry leaves and dry grass
- ✓ Paper and Cardboard
- ✓ Straw
- ✓ Saw dust (no treated materials)
- ✓ Egg shells
- ✓ Vacuum dust and hair
- ✓ Dolomite

- ✗ Bulbous weeds
- ✗ Meat and bones
- ✗ Dog or cat waste
- ✗ Fats, oil or dairy
- ✗ Bleached paper or glossy magazines

A successful compost requires a balance between brown and green materials.

remember to follow the ADAM principle



## Troubleshooting

### Smelly

Compost can smell if it gets too wet, doesn't have enough air or is too acidic.

Solution:

- Add brown materials
- Improve drainage with twigs at the base of the pile (if possible)
- Turn compost regularly for air flow
- Add two to three handfuls of dolomite, lime or wood ash to reduce acidity

### Not breaking down

Compost needs a good combination of ingredients, air, moisture and heat for materials to break down.

Solution:

- Add equal amounts of brown and green materials
- Add water if required (consistency of a wrung-out sponge)
- Turn compost regularly for air flow
- Ensure bin is placed in a sunny position
- Add finished compost (if possible)
- Keep materials small

### Unwanted visitors

*small fruit flies are fine*  
Maggots, mice, rats and cockroaches may visit under some conditions.

Solution:

- Place bin on top of wire mesh
- Cover all access points
- Turn regularly to avoid rats nesting
- Cover each layer of food with soil
- Avoid adding faeces, meat, dairy, bread or grains

Image (below): EnviroCom Australia 2013©



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