

FAQ – My compost



Where should I place my compost?

Place your compost in a semi-shaded area on unpaved or non-concrete ground to allow organisms like worms and insects to easily access and aid in decomposition. The compost should be aerated and not surrounded by closed walls.

What type of compost bin should be used in the garden?

Use a semi-open bin that allows good air and water exchange. A slatted composter made of untreated wood is ideal because its height can be adjusted according to the amount of compost. Removable boards in this type of composter facilitate access to and management of the compost. A metal mesh composter is more durable, while a plastic composter is easy to assemble and better protects against unwanted animals. Regardless of the type, it is important to cover the composter to promote heat, control humidity levels (by protecting from rain and preventing moisture loss), and prevent certain animals (especially birds) from feeding on it. Ideally, plan space for two (or even three) composters: one for new material and another for maturing compost (fill the first one in the first year, let it mature in the second year, and use it at the end of this period).

How to compost effectively?

For successful composting, ensure that the material is well mixed, with wet/green elements and dry/woody elements. Compost activators are generally not necessary but can speed up the process. Maintain a balance between moisture for microorganisms and aeration to avoid rot. To check if the moisture level is right, there's a simple test: take a handful of your compost and squeeze your fist – if two or three drops fall, it's perfect! Turning the compost ensures uniform decomposition and better aeration. If you want to speed up the process, turn the material regularly (e.g., once a month). However, if you do not feel the need to speed up composting, you can greatly reduce the frequency (e.g., turn the compost only once a year).

Should more green or brown material be put in the compost?

In home composting, it is important to maintain a good balance between green and brown materials to ensure efficient decomposition and avoid bad odors. Green materials are rich in nitrogen and include items like vegetable peels, fruit scraps, and grass clippings. Brown materials are rich in carbon and include items like dry leaves, unprinted cardboard, branches, and wood chips. Generally, it is recommended to have a ratio of 2 to 3 parts brown material to 1 part green material. This ratio helps maintain a good balance between nitrogen and carbon, promoting rapid decomposition and reducing the risk of unpleasant odors.

Can bread be put in the compost?

Yes, bread can be composted because it is made from grains and can decompose naturally. However, it is important to take some precautions. If the bread is dry but not moldy, it can be crushed into breadcrumbs before being added to the compost. This accelerates decomposition and prevents mold formation. If the bread is moldy, it is recommended to soak it in water before incorporating it into the compost. It is also advisable not to put large quantities of dry bread in the compost at once to avoid slow decomposition problems. By following these tips, bread can be a useful contribution to your compost pile.

Can I put paper or cardboard in the compost?

Yes, you can put paper and cardboard in the compost, but there are a few points to consider. Paper and cardboard should ideally be placed in the appropriate recycling bin. However, if you do not have enough brown material for your compost, you can add clean paper/cardboard. Avoid ink or plastic coatings, as these substances can be toxic to compost microorganisms. Also, paper contaminated with chemicals or non-compostable materials, such as paper towels or tissues used with products not compatible with compost, should not be added. Example: tissues used for nose-blowing can be contaminated with bacteria.

Can I throw tea bags in the compost?

Most tea bags are not compostable because they contain plastic. Check the packaging to see if they are made from natural materials like paper or compostable fibers. Otherwise, empty the tea leaves into the compost and throw the bag in the residual waste bin (black bin). Tea leaves are rich in nitrogen and beneficial for compost.

Why should certain waste be avoided in compost?

Some animal wastes, particularly meat and fish scraps, can attract unwanted pests and cause unpleasant odors when decomposing. Likewise, cooked food scraps, oils, and sauces are likely to ferment and create anaerobic conditions that promote rot rather than decomposition. Citrus, onion, and garlic contain compounds that can be toxic to some compost microorganisms and slow the decomposition process. To maintain a healthy and balanced compost, it is recommended to avoid these types of waste and focus on untreated plant materials and garden waste.

My compost smells bad! What can I do?

A healthy compost does not smell bad. Bad odors arise when the decomposition of certain foods is too slow or non-existent. Possible reasons:

- Excess moisture and lack of oxygen. A simple solution is to turn the compost regularly to aerate it and add dry material like chopped wood to reduce moisture.
- The presence of non-compostable waste such as meat or fish.
- A poor balance between brown material (rich in carbon) and green material (rich in nitrogen).

What to do if my compost is too dry?

If your compost is too dry, add green, moisture-rich materials such as vegetable peels, fruit scraps, or grass clippings. You can also lightly water the compost, but be careful not to make it too wet.

My compost attracts pests. What can I do?

To avoid attracting pests, do not put meat, fish, or cooked food scraps in the compost. Make sure to cover kitchen scraps well with brown material such as dry leaves or unprinted cardboard. Using a composter with a lid can also help.

What are the signs of healthy compost?

Healthy compost has a pleasant earthy smell, a homogeneous texture, and contains many worms and insects. It should not have unpleasant odors or signs of rot.

How long does it take to get ready-to-use compost?

The time required to obtain ready-to-use compost varies depending on conditions and materials used. Generally, it takes between 3 to 12 months. To speed up the process, ensure a good balance between green and brown materials, turn the compost regularly, and maintain adequate moisture.

How can the produced compost be used?

Compost can be used in several beneficial ways in the garden. It can serve as fertilizer for flower beds, perennials, vegetable gardens, and potted plants, providing essential nutrients for their growth. Additionally, mixed with existing garden soil, it improves soil structure, fertility, and water retention capacity, creating a healthier and more productive soil. Finally, compost helps to loosen and aerate heavy soils, facilitating plant growth and water infiltration.

Can I compost in winter?

Yes, it is possible to compost in winter. Decomposition may slow down due to lower temperatures, but the process continues. To help, you can insulate your composter with straw or leaves and continue to add compostable materials.

I don't have a garden. How can I compost?

If you don't have a garden, vermicomposting is an ideal solution. It uses worms to decompose organic waste and is perfect for small spaces like terraces. Another option is Bokashi composting, which ferments kitchen waste and produces a liquid fertilizer. Finally, explore community composting options offered by some municipalities, allowing you to drop off your waste at shared collection points.

