

What is composting?



Compost is a dark brown, earthy, crumbly material made of decomposed organic matter.

Benefits of Composted Material

When added to soil, compost improves soil porosity and water retention, and provides plants with essential nutrients.

Composting diverts organic materials from the waste stream and reduces our trash fees.

How Does Material Decompose?

Millions of microorganisms work to break down organic material. We can speed up composting by managing the process.

For More Information

Arrowsic Solid Waste and Recycling Committee
arrowsic.org/recycle.html
Maine Department of Environmental Protection
maine.gov/dep/sustainability/compost/index.html

COMPOST IT!

Fruit and vegetable scraps
Houseplants
Green plant trimmings
Weeds that have not gone to seed
Coffee grounds/filters or tea bags
Bread, pasta, cereal
Hair
Grass clippings
Wilted flowers

Dry leaves
Hay or straw
Wood chips
Sawdust (use sparingly)
Dryer lint
Dried grass clippings
Shredded cardboard or paper (mix well to prevent matting)

KEEP IT OUT!

Meat, fish, dairy products
Fats, oils, peanut butter
Mayonnaise, salad dressing
Dog or cat waste
Wood or charcoal ash
Grass clippings from herbicide-treated lawns
Glass, plastic, metal, or non-organic materials

USER'S GUIDE TO BACKYARD COMPOSTING IN ARROWSIC



**Arrowsic Solid Waste and
Recycling Committee**

How do I start a compost pile?

Start by picking a location.
Look for an area that is:

- ✓ Well-drained and close to level
- ✓ In partial shade, to help with water retention
- ✓ At least 1-foot away from walls, fences, bushes, trees, etc.
- ✓ A convenient spot to place materials and to get the end product to its final location

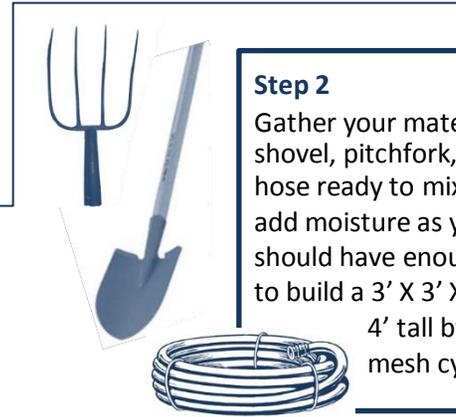


Image courtesy Kristy Hall, Flickr

Building the Pile

Step 1

Loosen the soil where you will place your compost. You may also want to pile a 4" to 6" layer of twigs on top of the soil to encourage airflow at the bottom of the pile.

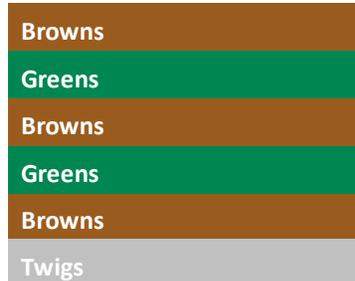


Step 2

Gather your materials. Have a shovel, pitchfork, and garden hose ready to mix materials and add moisture as you build. You should have enough material ready to build a 3' X 3' X 3' pile. Or fill a 4' tall by 4' diameter mesh cylinder.

Step 3

Make a composting sandwich. Starting with brown materials, alternate layers of 'greens' and 'browns,' mixing materials and adding water as you go. Bury food scraps in the center of the pile, and finish with a brown layer.



Step 4

You can add to a well-maintained compost pile year-round. Mixing the ingredients periodically with a shovel or heavy pitchfork will help speed up the composting process.

Step 5

Without adding new materials, your compost should be ready to add to your garden in about a year. Watching your garden flourish from the compost you have created is worth all of the work you put into it!



What tools will I need?

These tools may help get you started:

- Compost bin
- Pitchfork (compost turner)
- Chipper/shredder
- Wheelbarrow (for transport)
- Garden hose
- 4' X 12' sturdy, coated, wire mesh (to form cylinder to contain compost pile, if desired)