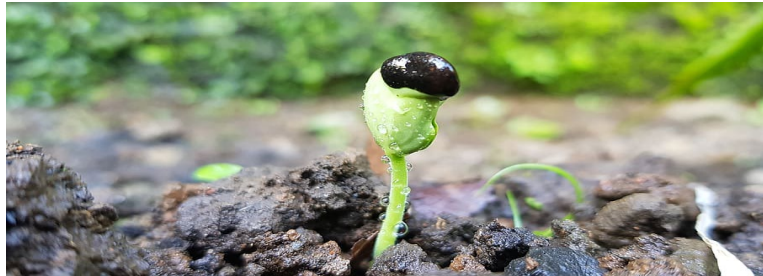


# Composting at Home

By Buff Levine, Diane Fisher, and Robyn Stone



# What is Compost?

Compost is organic matter (such as leaves and egg shells) that has been decomposed by microorganisms such as **bacteria** and **fungi**, or invertebrates like **insects**, **pill bugs** (rollie-pollies) and **worms**.

Composting is **Nature**'s way of recycling!



# 3 Composting Methods

## 1. On the Ground:

yard waste layers

## 1. Brown & Green:

dried leaves or newspaper & vegan kitchen waste

## 1. Vermiculture:

worms & select vegan kitchen waste



# On the Ground

1. Select a 3x3 foot site for your  
compost pile.

Water it well to awaken the earthworms.





## 2. Loosen the soil with a pitch fork



3. My simple wire composter:  
3'high x 12' long-  $\frac{1}{2}$ " wire mesh (hardware cloth).



4. Stand it up to form a circle and fasten with hooks and eyes.





5. Put down a layer of branches or stalks for aeration.





6. Add a layer of dry matter: leaves, grass, hay.





7. Add a layer of green matter: weeds, kitchen waste, grass clippings, hedge trimmings.



8. Cover with a  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch layer of soil





9.Repeat the dry brown layer, wet green layer, and soil layer until the pile is 3 feet high. Water between each layer. The top layer of soil should be  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 inch thick. Put a layer of leaves on top (optional).

## **Do not compost:**

- **Poison oak**
- **Oleander**
- **Very oily salad**
- **Dog & cat waste**
- **Pine needles**--*unless you will put the compost on acid loving plants*

10. Remove the wire cage. Let it rest for 3 - 4 weeks. Meanwhile and make a new compost pile elsewhere.





11. Turn the pile over with a pitch fork.



12. After 8 weeks the compost is ready to use. Its OK to let it rest for up to 6 months.





This book will explain bio-intensive gardening more thoroughly.





# Brown & Green

The Brown & Green method is really referring to the Carbon & Nitrogen content of your compost. BUT FUGETTABOUTIT!

If you have kitchen scraps and newspaper, you can compost! You will be keeping methane, a very potent greenhouse gas, from being released from the landfill. In addition to cutting back on climate change, you will also have a product that can be used to improve your soil. It's a win-win situation, and easy to do.





## A tiny bit of science

All living organisms have a lot of carbon, and a smaller amount of nitrogen. The microorganisms and macroorganisms that eat your compost, use the browns which have carbon for energy and proteins. They use the greens which have nitrogen to synthesize the proteins.

The world of microorganisms in your trash is truly amazing. 1 teaspoon of dirt has more microbes than there are people on the earth. In your compost you will have microorganisms like bacteria and fungi, and also macroorganisms like nematodes, springtails, centipedes, pillbugs, beetles. There are no bad bugs in a compost.



# The supplies

I recently got this FreeGarden EARTH compost bin, ordered online and it arrived in a giant box completely assembled. It is quite huge (33" x 31"), so good if you eat a lot of fresh food that generates kitchen scraps.

It has a lid that is easy to remove but locks on the top, and a lower door for removing completed compost.

It is made of recycled materials. It has ventilation on the sides, and has 4 screw pegs to secure to the ground.





# The Greens

It's nice to have a **collection bucket** with a lid to keep on the kitchen counter.

Things to throw in your collection bucket:

Fruit, vegetables, coffee grounds, egg shells, peels, tea bags

Things to NOT throw in your collection bucket:

Dairy, meat or fish, oils





# The Browns

I only have eucalyptus trees in my backyard, and those leaves don't compost well. But I take two newspapers daily, and that serves as my Browns.

The MOST important thing about using newspaper to compost is you need to shred it reasonably well. Big sheets of newspaper will not compost well. I know, I've made that mistake.

Shredding newspaper is a good exercise for your arms.

# Tools

Two other tools are useful:

A **watering bucket or hose** nearby. When you add your shredded newspaper to the compost bin, you should moisten the paper to the level of a wrung-out sponge. Then you will have the 4 ingredients necessary for composting: carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and water.

A **pitchfork** is useful for mixing your compost. It adds oxygen to the pile, which controls the level of anaerobic bacteria--and the smell!







This method is considered “slow composting”. I just add material as it accumulates. Until there is a reasonably full bin, there isn’t enough mass to generate much heat, although the lid helps retain heat. So I will likely have compost ready for my garden in about 6 months, which can be removed from the bottom of the pile through the lower door.

# Vermiculture

Commercially available “worm condo”

DIY: Stack plastic bins; drill holes

Purchase “red wiggler” (*Eisenia Fetida*) worms in bulk

Worms digest select vegan kitchen waste

Prepare worm “bed” with newspaper or coconut coir

Avoid: citrus peel; coffee grounds; onions

Nutrient-rich black compost & worm “tea”



# Bibliography

Applehoff, Mary. **Worms Eat My Garbage: How to Set Up and Maintain a Worm Composting System**

Campbell, Stu. **Let it Rot! The Gardener's Guide to Composting**

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Martin, Deborah. **The Rodale Book of Composting.**