



COMPOSTING: GETTING STARTED

Composting is an easy way to reduce your household waste by up to one third. As a reward you get a high quality soil conditioner for your garden. Composting is a natural process, but it works best when it is properly managed. This fact sheet will give you the information you need to keep your compost pile healthy and productive.

Where to put your bin

Finding the right spot for your composter is really a personal decision. The key is to make it convenient for you to use. The spot should be well-drained, get some sun for at least half the day, and be fairly close to a source of water. Also, be mindful of neighbours when locating your composter.

Getting Started

There are five basic factors to keep in mind when you compost:

1. ORGANIC MATERIAL

The process works best when you start with a good variety of kitchen and yard wastes. It may help to think of them in two categories: "greens" and "browns." Greens include vegetable peelings, fruit scraps, fresh grass clippings, and young weeds. Common browns include leaves, coffee grounds, wood shavings, and hay. Greens and browns combine to give you the balance of nutrients you need for composting to work well. For best results, add them in thin layers or mixed together. Chopping up what you add will also speed up the composting process. A thick layer of one material may slow things down. **Do not add meat, fish or bones, fatty foods or dairy products.** These can cause odours and attract pests. Dog or cat manure, diseased plants, and weeds with mature seeds should also be kept out.



2. MOISTURE

Your compost pile should be about as moist as a wrung-out sponge. If you pick up a handful of compost and squeeze it, you should get a few drops of water. The decomposition process can stop completely if the pile becomes too dry, so add water as needed during hot, dry periods. If the pile gets too wet, mix in more dry materials, aerate by turning contents, or leave the lid off for a few sunny days.

3. AIR

Some air circulation is needed for composting to be odour-free. Occasionally poking holes into the compost with a rake or broom handle, or turning it every few weeks, will ensure that enough air is present. Tools to simplify aeration (and save your back!) are available locally. Call GreenUP for details.

Did you know? The smaller the pieces of compost are, the faster they will compost! Increasing surface area of the pieces allow for more bugs and microorganisms to do their work, meaning you'll have compost faster.

COMPOSTING: GETTING STARTED

4. MICROORGANISMS

Your composter is full of life. Bacteria, fungi, insects, worms, and other organisms all play a role in breaking down the organic materials you put in. Periodically adding a layer of garden soil to your bin will make sure that these organisms are still present. Covering freshly added food wastes with a thin layer of soil or leaves will also discourage unwanted pests, like flies.

5. TIME

It takes time for kitchen and yard waste to break down into compost. How much time depends on how well the process is managed. Finished compost is likely to take anywhere from six months to more than a year to produce, though it can be faster if you are very attentive. If you add large, unchopped materials, they may take up to two years to break down. Though, you can sift out larger materials when you harvest your compost, and place them back in the bin to finish decomposing.

Helpful Hints

Save some of your leaves in autumn to add to your pile during the rest of the year. Leaves are like soil; covering fresh food wastes with a layer of them will discourage flies and reduce odours. Shredding the leaves with the lawn mower will allow you to pack more in a bag for storage and will speed up their decomposition. Many households find that they produce enough organic material to fill two compost bins. They add fresh material to one bin while material in the other bin is left to decompose. The second bin can then be emptied, and it becomes the "active" bin. You can get additional composters through GreenUP, City of Peterborough, and County of Peterborough.

Need a Composter?

The City and County of Peterborough provide composters to local residents for a nominal fee. These are available at the Household Hazardous Waste Depot on Pido Road, at the City and County offices, and at the GreenUP Store in downtown Peterborough.

Need More Compost?

Regardless of how much compost you produce at home, many gardeners are looking for even more "black gold" to add to their gardens.

Small quantities can be purchased at GreenUP Ecology Park from May through October. Call GreenUP for details 705-745-3238.



WHAT TO COMPOST

	Do Compost!	Don't Compost!
KITCHEN SCRAPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Fruit and vegetable scraps  Dry bread  Eggshells (crushed)  Rice and grains  Coffee grounds and filters  Tea bags and leaves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Meat, fish, or bones  Dairy products  Oils  Liquids (soap, juice, etc.)
YARD WASTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Leaves  Grass clippings  Plant trimmings  Hay  Sawdust (untreated wood)  Weeds (not in seed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Plants treated with pesticides  Invasive weeds such as quackgrass  Weeds in seed  Diseased plants
HOUSEKEEPING WASTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Ashes from untreated wood (small quantities only)  Hair  Feathers  Natural rope  Cotton rags (solvent-free)  Shredded unbleached paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Treated wood ash or sawdust  Barbecue ash or charcoal  Vacuum cleaner contents  Dryer lint  Pet waste

COMPOSTING SOLUTIONS

PROBLEM	Cause	Solutions
Ammonia smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much nitrogen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix in "browns" such as dry leaves • Turn pile and top with soil
Rotten egg smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough air 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn or aerate pile regularly • Add dry materials in layers to help circulate air
Pile is damp; middle is not hot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pile is too small 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect more compostable material; mix into existing pile
Nothing is happening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of nitrogen • Material size too large • Pile may be too dry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add nitrogen-rich "greens" such as grass clippings and veggie scraps • Cut up kitchen wastes more finely • Add moisture and turn pile
Insect or animal pests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Odour is attracting pests • Wrong materials added 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover pile with leaves, straw, or soil after adding food waste • Don't compost meat, fish, bones, dairy or oils



Why Compost?

Backyard composting reduces your own household waste and helps the environment. Composting conserves landfill space and decreases greenhouse gas emissions. It also provides you with the "superhero" of soils for your garden!

Home Composter Installation

Get started with a backyard composter installation, brought to you by GreenUP and the City of Peterborough. For \$20, residents will receive home delivery, installation and instructional support. Beginning in May, the program will run through to August, 2018. Call early to ensure your spot on the list.

Eligibility & Registration

To be eligible for the Kitchen to Compost: too good to waste program, you must be a resident living within the City of Peterborough and be new to composting.

To register for the Kitchen to Compost program, please contact Danica Jarvis at 705-745-3238 ext. 216 or email waste@greenup.on.ca for further information.

Questions?

Following the tips in this fact sheet will help you to get started with backyard composting. If you have further questions, or want to know more, visit greenup.on.ca or call us at 705-745-3238.

From Spring to Fall, GreenUP Ecology Park operates a compost demonstration site. Drop in to watch composting process in action and see the beautiful results of using finished compost in your garden. During Garden Market hours, Ecology Park staff are also on hand to answer your composting questions.



www.greenup.on.ca
705.745.3238
378 Aylmer Street N. Ptbo ON K9H 3V8

