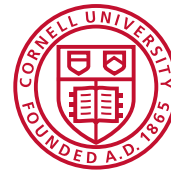


Cornell Cooperative Extension

Cornell Garden-Based Learning



Composting FAQs

Q: Why should we compost?

A: To reduce needless contributions to the waste stream, which turn into potent greenhouse gases like methane and carbon dioxide. Instead, create a product which improves soil quality and promotes healthy plants. Learn more about Backyard Composting from the Cornell Waste Management Institute website <http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/smallscale.htm>

Q: Who can compost?

A: There are approaches and systems available for homeowners, apartment dwellers and communities, large, small and in between. Anyone, anywhere can compost.

Q: What can I put in my home compost pile? Will it smell?

A: Use plant wastes such as leaves, grass clippings and spent plants, non-protein food scraps, as well as paper, cardboard and wood chips. Layer 1-part Greens with 3-parts Browns. No meat, no dairy, no diseased or seedy plant material, and be careful with manures. Your compost bin will not smell if you add enough Browns. Learn more about balancing Greens and Browns from Composting at Home: The Green and Brown Alternative found at <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/29111>

Q: Will it attract pests?

A: Not unless you add pest-attracting food. Lions and tigers and bears (oh my!) will not eat your compost if done correctly. Learn more about Preventing Animal Nuisances in Small Scale Composting from the Cornell Waste Management Institute website <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/2177>

Q: Is it expensive and does it take up a lot of room?

A: No, simple systems can be built inexpensively. Learn more about Choosing a Compost System from the CCE Suffolk Diagnostic lab at https://s3.amazonaws.com/assets.cce.cornell.edu/attachments/5282/Choosing_a_Compost_System.pdf?1418849831

Q: What do I do with the finished product?

A: Compost is a valuable soil amendment and may also be used as mulch. Compost contains plant nutrients and improves both soil aeration and water-holding capacity.

Q: What happens if I don't turn the pile?

A: Compost happens, but at a slower rate. The more you turn the pile, the quicker you will produce compost.

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

Diversity and Inclusion are a part of Cornell University's heritage. We are a recognized employer and educator valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities.

Q: When is compost finished and ready to be used?

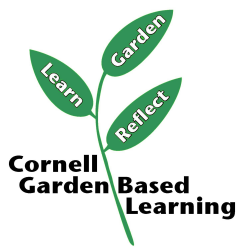
A: It is dark, crumbly, earthy smelling (not smelling like ammonia or rotten eggs), the original materials are not recognizable, and it will no longer heat up even after mixing.

Q: If I were to remember just the basics of home composting, what would it be?

A: That to compost effectively, you need the right combination of materials, space, air and water. For more information on Home Composting visit the Cornell Waste Management Institute website at <http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/composting.htm> and read the brochure “Home Composting” found at <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/bitstream/handle/1813/44638/compostbrochure.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>

Q: What is vermicomposting?

A: Vermicomposting is composting with worms. It is typically done indoors in a closed bin populated with red wiggler worms that eat organic waste and expel it as worm castings or droppings. For more information on vermicomposting, visit the resources at the Cornell Waste Management Institute website at <http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/vermicompost.htm>



Date Published: April 2019

Contributor(s): Multiple CCE county educators

Reviewer(s): Donna Alese Cooke

Revised May 2020

Please note that neither CCE nor any representative thereof makes any representation of any warranty, express or implied, of any particular result or application of the information provided by us or regarding any product. If a product is involved it is the sole responsibility of the User to read and follow all product labeling instructions and to check with the manufacturer or supplier for the most recent information. Nothing contained in this information should be interpreted as an express or implied endorsement of any particular product or criticism of unnamed products. With respect to any information on pest management the User is responsible for obtaining the most up-to-date pest management information. The information we provide is no substitute for pesticide labeling. The User is solely responsible for reading and following manufacturer's labeling and instructions. – 2018 F.O.R.M. Code 1501 pg 20