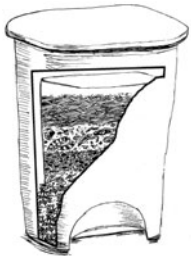


Choose Your COMPOST BIN

In an apartment

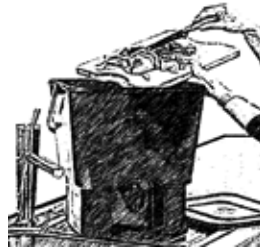
Try these indoor methods. Ask a Master Composter for more info, or visit our website at www.cctompkins.org/compost for how-to guides and classes.



Stealth Bin: This bin-within-a-bin system can be made using two kitchen trash containers.



Worm Bin: Red wiggler worms can live under your sink, and turn your food scraps into rich compost.



Bokashi Composting: This method ferments your food scraps using anaerobic bacteria.



Food Scraps Recycling
Tompkins County Dept. of Recycling and Materials Management will accept food scraps for recycling into compost.

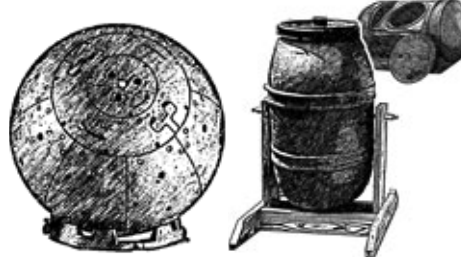
On a small lot or with nearby neighbors

You can use any of the above methods, or try these small-space systems.

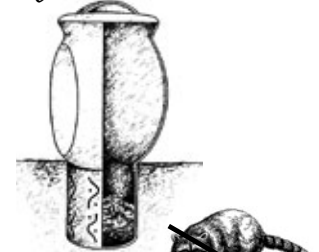
Static Systems



Tumblers



Digester Bin

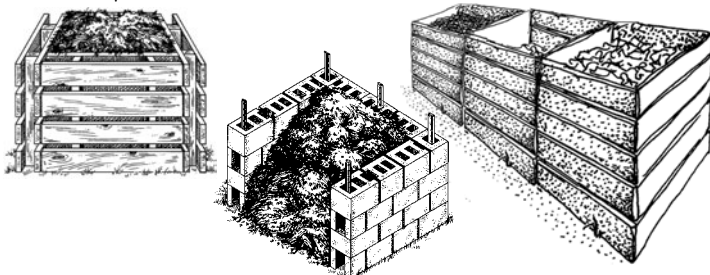


These, more enclosed, bins are a good choice if you are concerned about critters getting into your compost.

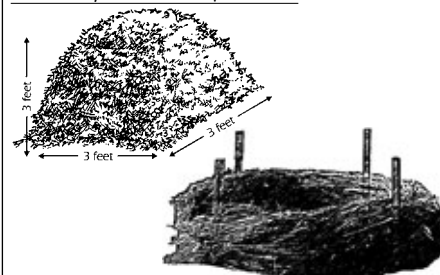
On a larger property

You can use a combination of indoor or small-space methods, or try these larger systems to handle greater amounts of yard and garden waste.

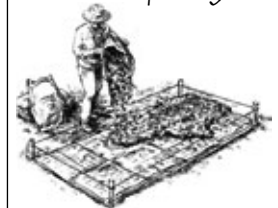
Static Systems



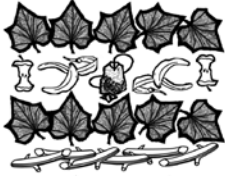
Binless, Static Systems



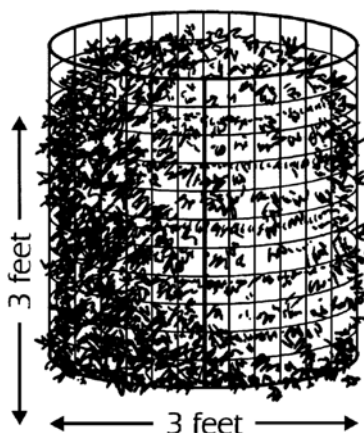
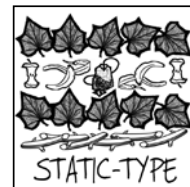
Sheet Composting



There are lots of ways to compost outdoors and many bins to choose from; some store-bought and some custom made. All outdoor compost bins fall into four basic categories. Use this page to determine which type of system best suits your needs, then use our resource booklet on individual bins to elect a specific composter.

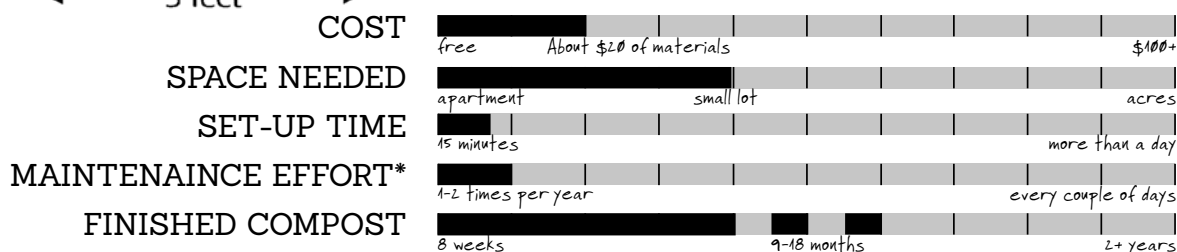
T Y P E	 STATIC-TYPE	 TURNING-UNIT	 TUMBLER-TYPE	 DIGESTER-TYPE
D E S C R I P T I O N	These systems involve layering food scraps, dry organic material, and garden trimmings. The pile grows over time. Stationary static piles can be turned, or not, depending on how fast you want to make compost. Some are open structured, and some have solid floors, walls, and/or lids.	These systems are closely related to static-type systems, usually with three sections: one section used as a basic static-bin for collecting new material in layers of browns and greens, one section in which partially-composted material continues to decompose, and one section for curing.	These are a great way to produce compost in batches: fill the bin 2/3 full with 1 part greens, 3 parts browns. Next, seal the bin and add no more. Tumble it regularly for a few weeks until the materials look like compost. Empty the bin and cure the compost until it is ready to be in contact with plants. This system works well as long as you have another place to gather your browns and greens while this is in its tumbling phase.	These systems decompose small amounts of food scraps - even items like meat and dairy - in an underground hole contained in a basket-like structure. Once the hole is full, unearth the basket and move your digester to a new location.
U S E R	Static systems are great for people who want to add food scraps on a regular basis, and who have small amounts of garden trimmings or yard waste to add.	These turning units are excellent for someone who has larger amounts of food scraps, garden trimmings and/or yard waste. They will produce finished compost regularly.	This is an excellent system for someone who has medium amounts of food scraps and/or garden trimmings and yard waste and who wants to produce finished compost quickly.	These systems are ideal for someone who wants to dispose of small amounts of food scraps only, no garden/yard waste. Some people use these systems to dispose of pet waste.
S I Z E	From 2'x2' to 4'x4' depending on system.	Three sections, about 3'x3' each depending on materials.	Up to a 3'x3' footprint.	Up to a 2'x2' footprint.
A N I M A L S	Well-managed bins will generally not attract animals. Bins with mesh or solid top, bottom, and sides can keep out persistent critters.	Since these systems are usually custom built, they can be made with hardware cloth on all sides to prevent unwanted animal visitors.	Since these seal completely, and they are up off the ground, they are good at keeping pests out.	Since these seal completely, they are good at keeping pests out.
S P E E D	You may find finished compost at the bottom of these systems in 6-12 months, depending on your inputs and habits.	You can make finished compost in your third section in 6-9 months, depending on your inputs and how frequently you turn the material.	A tumbler will shorten the first phase of composting from 6 months to 8 weeks. After that, they still require about 6 months of curing before the material is ready for contact with plants.	These are meant to dispose of waste, not to produce finished compost. However, the digested food scraps will enrich the soil wherever the digester is placed.

WELDED WIRE



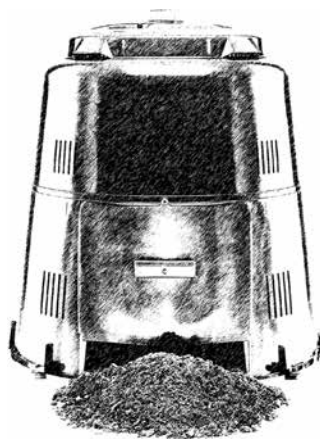
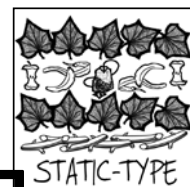
Advantages: Well suited for composting kitchen and garden scraps, with layers of leaves, straw or other carbon-rich “browns” mixed in with, and covering, the food scraps. Extremely easy to assemble and to customize the size depending on your space and compost needs. One of the least expensive ways to build a compost bin.

Disadvantages: Not critter proof, though making sure your scraps are covered with an adequate layer of browns will deter less persistent creatures. Not weather proof, so may need some extra attention to make sure it doesn’t get too dry, too wet, or snow covered. While fairly easy to harvest, slightly harder than smooth-sided bins, especially if wire gets bent. Can look messy.



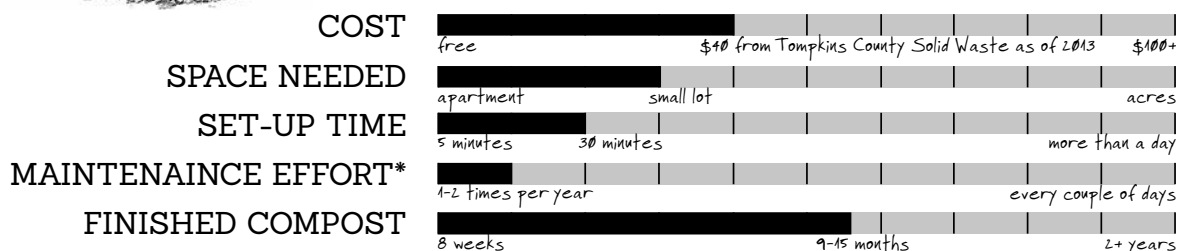
*Some maintenance (checking moisture, adding food scraps and “browns”) applies to all systems. This effort rating applies to the work that is specific to this system.

EARTH MACHINE



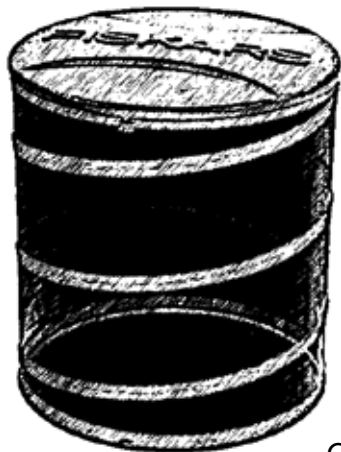
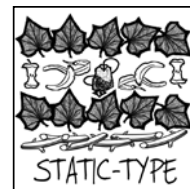
Advantages: Well suited for composting kitchen scraps, with layers of leaves, straw or other carbon-rich “browns” mixed in with, and covering, the food scraps. In the winter the lid keeps out snow and ice. The door allows (some) harvesting of finished compost from the bottom. While not critter-proof, it is animal resistant and can easily be made critter-proof with the modification of hardware cloth at the base and over the vents. Ideal for use in town when space is at a premium, neighbors are nearby, or where critters are likely to invade your bin.

Disadvantages: Not big enough to handle large amounts of yard waste. May have to water the contents to maintain adequate moisture. Door is a little awkward.



*Some maintenance (checking moisture, adding food scraps and “browns”) applies to all systems. This effort rating applies to the work that is specific to this system.

POP-UP BIN



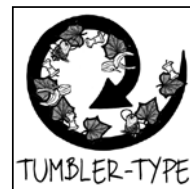
Advantages: Well suited for composting kitchen and garden scraps, with layers of leaves, straw, or other carbon-rich “browns” mixed in with, and covering, the food scraps. This is by far the easiest bin to set-up. Unlike all other bins, it is also very easy to break down and transport since it flattens, making it ideal for renters or transient people. Good air circulation.

Disadvantages: Not critter-proof; there are reports of rodents chewing through the mesh. If materials are not evenly distributed, the bin will lean. Included stakes may not be adequate for all soil types.



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ROLLING BIN



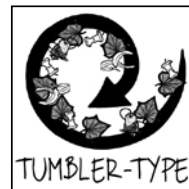
Advantages: When used properly, tumblers are the fastest compost producers of all systems. It works best as a “batch” composter - fill no more than 2/3 with 1 part food scraps and 3 parts browns, then seal and tumble regularly for the prescribed number of weeks. This kind of sealed bin is critter-proof. Kids love to roll this around the yard.

Disadvantages: High failure rate when instructions not followed. You’ll need another bin to hold compostables while this one is making compost since adding fresh materials delays the production of finished compost. Can get very heavy when over-filled.



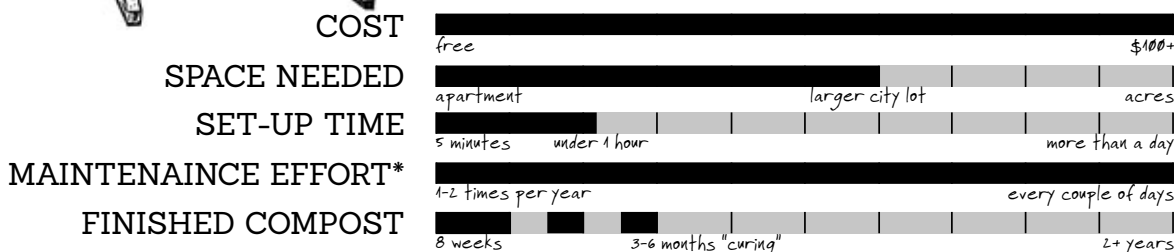
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TUMBLER BIN



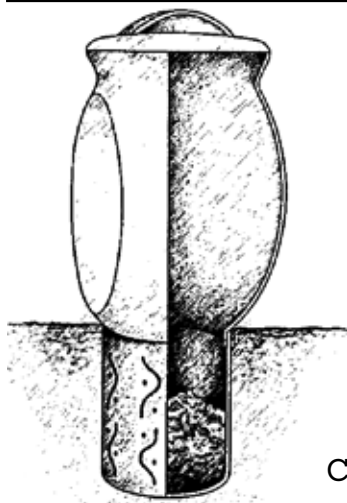
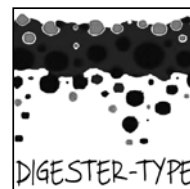
Advantages: When used properly, tumblers are the fastest compost producers of all systems. They come in many shapes and sizes, but all function similarly as a “batch” composters - fill 2/3 full with 1 part food scraps and 3 parts browns, then seal and tumble regularly for a number of weeks. This kind of sealed bin is critter-proof.

Disadvantages: High failure rate when instructions not followed. You'll need a secondary system to hold compostables while this one is making compost, since adding fresh materials delays the composting process. Large tumblers can get very heavy when filled and become hard to turn. Commercial versions can be expensive, though cheaper DIY instructions can be found on-line.



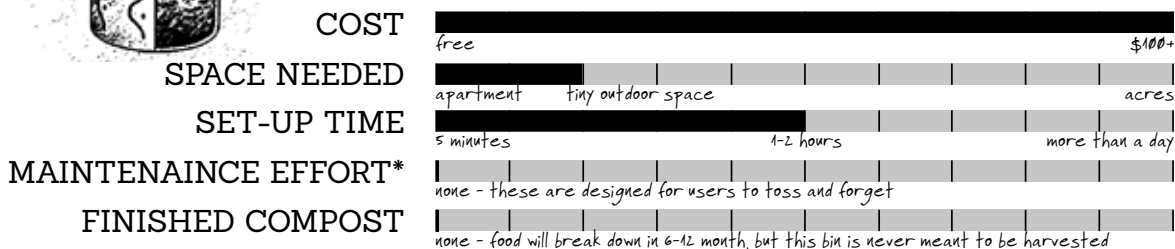
*Some maintenance (checking moisture, adding food scraps and “browns”) applies to all systems. This effort rating applies to the work that is specific to this system.

DIGESTER BIN



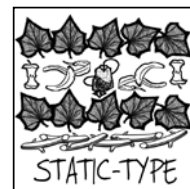
Advantages: Digesters are designed to handle small amounts of food waste - even items banned from a regular compost bin, such as meat and cheese. The footprint is small (2'x2'). As food waste decomposes, the leachate feeds nearby plants. This system is designed not to be harvested or turned; once it is set up there is no more effort required. Can also be used for pet waste.

Disadvantages: This system CANNOT handle large quantities of food waste or ANY yard waste, if too much is added there will be a very smelly mess that will take many months to decompose. May attract critters if not securely built. Does not produce compost for your garden. Can be expensive (though DIY instructions can be found online).



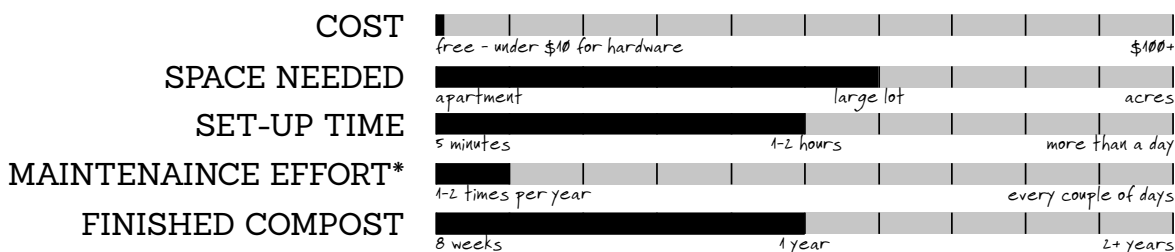
*Some maintenance (checking moisture, adding food scraps and “browns”) applies to all systems. This effort rating applies to the work that is specific to this system.

PALLET BIN



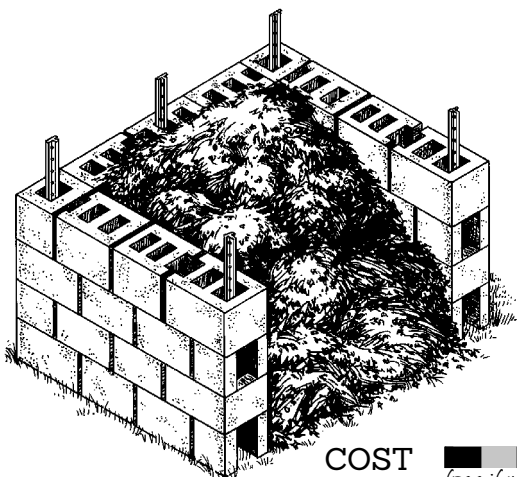
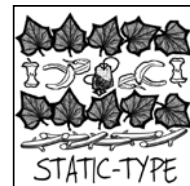
Advantages: From FREE sourced materials, this bin is large enough to handle both yard waste and food scraps. Can be easily assembled with no building skills by simply wrapping wires where two pallets meet at each corner or built with tools by screwing pallets together. It is possible to hinge the front pallet to act as a door. The open spaces create good air flow.

Disadvantages: Not critter or weather proof. Wooden pallets vary widely in quality and size, so effort is required to make sure pallets match and are in good repair. Transporting pallets requires a vehicle with cargo room. The wood will degrade within a few years. If you have aesthetic concerns, this bin may not suit your needs.



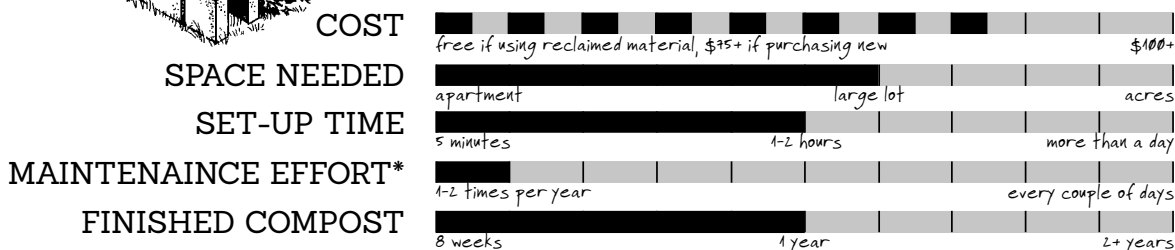
*Some maintenance (checking moisture, adding food scraps and "browns") applies to all systems. This effort rating applies to the work that is specific to this system.

BLOCK BIN



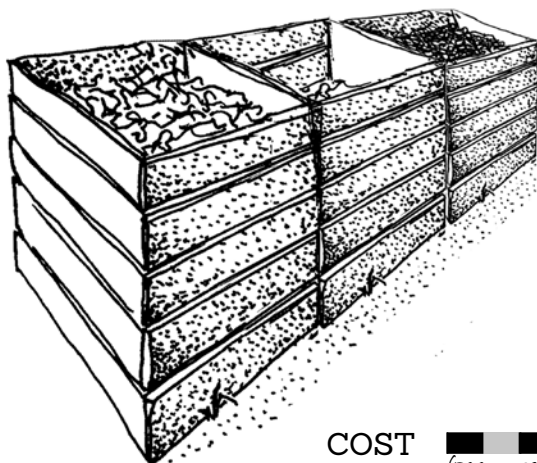
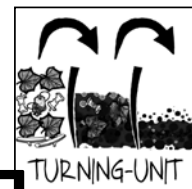
Advantages: When using reclaimed cinder blocks, this is a FREE bin that makes use of a discarded construction material that is often difficult to get rid of otherwise. Can be made to whatever size suits your needs, even as a three-bin system (though a minimum of 3'x3' interior dimension is recommended). Sturdy and durable.

Disadvantages: Not critter or weather proof. Stinging insects may nest in holes of blocks. Requires heavy work to assemble. If purchasing new, can cost about \$75 and up, and requires heavy transport. If you have aesthetic concerns, this bin may not suit your needs.



*Some maintenance (checking moisture, adding food scraps and "browns") applies to all systems. This effort rating applies to the work that is specific to this system.

THREE BIN UNIT



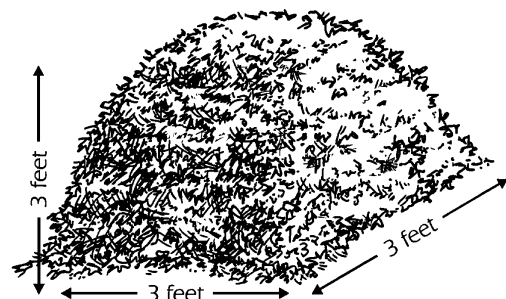
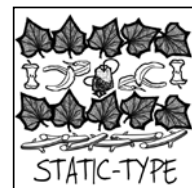
Advantages: Unparalleled in compost production. Can handle large amounts of food scraps and yard waste. Endlessly customizable - there are units that qualify as fine woodworking and units that are made from scavenged shipping pallets.

Disadvantages: Requires more space than all other systems. For faster compost production, requires regular turning of a large volume of materials. Requires some building skills to assemble. Depending on materials used, can be very expensive.



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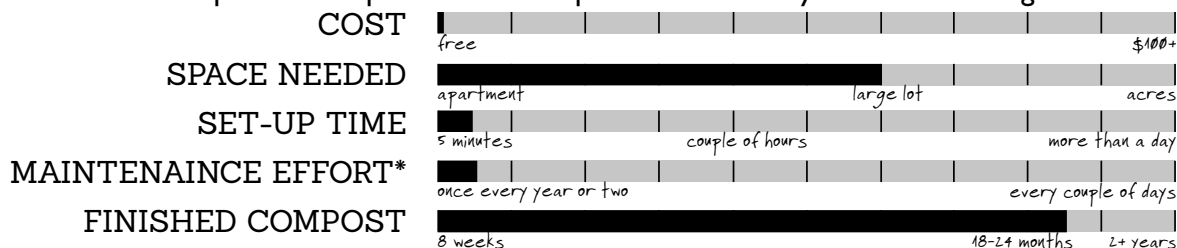
COMPOST HEAP



Advantages: No bin necessary! This is simply a pile, with stalky items at the bottom for aeration, and then "lasagna" layers of greens and browns. A pile should be at least 3' by 3' but can be built up to 5' wide, and as long as necessary to accommodate the quantity of materials. This way of making compost is quick to build and completely FREE. It uses only food scraps, garden trimmings, and browns. If positioned where you may

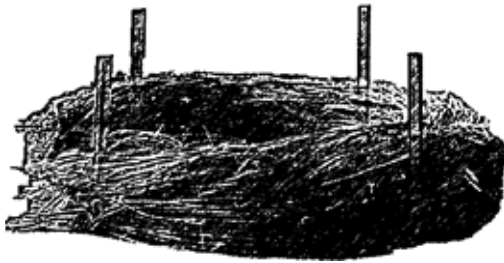
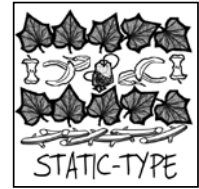
want a garden bed in the future, this pile can enrich the soil for successful future gardening. Turning is not required, but doing so may speed decomposition.

Disadvantages: This is an open pile - not at all critter proof. Winds may blow away your covering of browns and expose uncomposted food scraps. Can look untidy if not well-managed.



*Some maintenance (checking moisture, adding food scraps and "browns") applies to all systems. This effort rating applies to the work that is specific to this system.

BIRD'S NEST



Advantages: This is an EASY great way to use up a large volume of stalky, rough garden trimmings. The walls create a boundary for all the “greens and browns” you’ll be adding. The outer portion of the walls settle and retain their shape while the inner portion breaks down. The walls can be replenished and made taller as necessary. This can be built larger or in series to handle large amounts of waste. Best of all, this uses up free

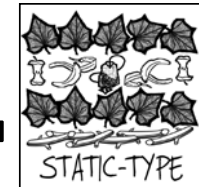
material that is usually too big to compost and would require other disposal. No turning required.

Disadvantages: Requires a minimum of a 5'x5' footprint. Not the bin for you if you need critter-proof composting, have a small space, or don't like a rustic look. Harvesting requires dismantling one wall. Slow.



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SHEET COMPOST

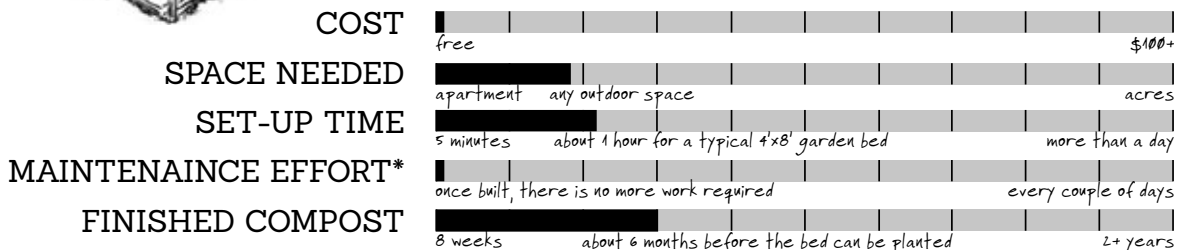


Advantages: This is a favorite “lazy” composting method, perfect for creating new garden beds: layer cardboard over where you want the new garden bed, then alternate thin layers of greens and browns,



finally top with a thick layer of browns. About 6 months later you'll have a garden bed filled with rich compost. Best done in fall to have a prepared bed for spring planting. Completely FREE since it only uses waste materials. No turning. Can be done easily even for folks with limited mobility.

Disadvantages: This is a one-time way of getting rid of food scraps or garden trimmings, so you'll need enough greens and browns to build the bed. Not ideal if you want to plant right away. Not an everyday solution to disposing of food scraps.



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