

Home Composting

Composting is nature's way of recycling which can improve the condition of your soil, reduce your need for fertilizer, and extend the life of our landfills. Composting your yard debris and food scraps can also cut your garbage disposal costs considerably. If you have space and a lot of yard debris, consider an uncovered outdoor compost bin. If you don't have much space and generate a lot of kitchen waste, consider using a worm bin.

All you need to create compost is 4 basic ingredients:

GREEN: Add grass clippings and other green yard debris.

BROWN: Mix in leaves, wood chips, and other brown material.

AIR: Turn the pile to mix in air and help the compost cook faster.

WATER: Add water so the pile is as damp as a wrung-out sponge.

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| <p>DO COMPOST Grass clippings Leaves Flowers Twigs and prunings Weeds (no seed heads) Vegetable and fruit peelings Coffee grounds and filters Tea bags Egg shells</p> | | <p>DON'T COMPOST Meat, fish or poultry Dairy products Grease or cooking oil Bread or grains Pet waste Dead animals Invasive weeds (quack grass, morning glory, ivy) Diseased plants Weeds without seed heads</p> |
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OUTDOOR COMPOST BINS

A 3-foot by 3-foot compost pile is considered a minimum size for hot fast composting. Your compost pile is ready to use when it is dark and crumbly like soil. Mix it in your garden or flower beds to improve the soil. Or spread it on top as mulch to prevent weeds and hold in moisture.

WORM BINS

Red worms quickly and efficiently process food waste into a rich compost. All you need to create your own worm bin are the following 4 things:

- a wide and shallow container
- red worms (usually sold by the pound)
- bedding (such as shredded newspaper)
- fruit and vegetable scraps from your kitchen

Worm bins may be located outdoors, or in the basement, shed, garage, balcony or under the

kitchen counter. They need to be kept moist, dark, and out of hot sun. Availability of worms may fluctuate seasonally. A list of suppliers is available from Metro Recycling Information (503) 234-3000.

YARD DEBRIS

Columbia County has no current method of dealing with the huge amount of yard debris that is thrown away. Beaver Bark, in Scappoose, will accept yard debris, land-clearing debris, stumps, and clean lumber for a fee.

GRASS

Instead of bagging it, grasscycle! Grasscycling, or the practice of leaving grass clippings on the lawn, is one way to cut down on yard debris. Grass clippings are 75-85% water. When you grasscycle regularly, clippings quickly decompose and release nutrients back into your lawn. Generally, you should cut your grass to about 2-3 inches, preferably when grass is dry. Extra grass can be composted or mulched. When it's time to buy a new mower, consider buying a rechargeable electric mulching mower. Although grass clippings contain organic nitrogen, grasscycling is not a complete substitute for fertilizer. It can, however, reduce your fertilizer needs by more than 50%.