



HOW TO COMPOST



There are many ways to make compost. You can use bins, tumblers or covered heaps. For everyday kitchen scraps and garden refuse we recommend bins that are round, open at the bottom and sit on the ground.

Why Compost?

Getting Started

1. It is essential to choose a site that is shady because worms and most compost microbes will die if the bin contents dries out or get too hot. Make sure the bin is easy to access from your kitchen.
2. Dig the bin into the ground to at least 10cm. This deters unwanted visitors like rodents and cockroaches. Tip: Cover base with mouse mesh.
3. Add a layer of small twigs, egg cartons and/or dry leaves. This acts to aerate the compost.
4. Add activators such as animal manures, compost from an old heap, blood and bone.
5. Lightly spray with water.
6. Your bin is now ready to use on a daily basis for most kitchen scraps and garden refuse. As a rough guide add two thirds kitchen scraps to one third dry ingredients. Add a diversity of ingredients for richer compost and to keep a balanced Ph level.
7. When your bin is one third full turn your compost with a compost mate and do this every couple of weeks. This aerates the compost and speeds up the process.
8. Monitor the compost - see over for troubleshooting.

Don't panic! The finished product may not look like commercial compost. Different materials will compost at a different rate, some chunks and eggshells in your compost is fine – your garden won't mind!

- No more smelly wheelie bins.
- Around 60% of our general waste is organic and organic matter in landfills produce methane as it breaks down. Methane is 80 times more potent a greenhouse gas as carbon dioxide.
- Organic matter in the worlds agricultural soils has dropped from 20% to around 2%. Composting is one way to capture organic matter and carbon in our soils.
- Make your own compost - it is essential for successful gardening in Perth! Compost improves soil structure, holds water and makes nutrients available to plant roots.

Compost bins can be purchased from gardening stores. Some councils offer compost bins at a discounted rate.



Compost ingredients

Anything that once lived can be composted; however, to get started the following items are a good guide. In general add **around two thirds kitchen scraps to one third carbon ingredients**.

Green/wet/ nitrogen rich

Fruit and veggie kitchen scraps
Tea leaves and bags
Coffee grounds
Cut flowers
Grass clippings
Manures

Brown/dry/ carbon rich

Garden refuse (not woody branches)
Paper products
Dry leaves
Sawdust
Straw

Activators

Comfrey and yarrow
Animal manure
Blood and bone
Made compost

Yes, you can add

Onion, garlic
Citrus
Eggshells
Teabags
Small amounts of plate scrapings (pasta, bread, cheese, meat)
Eucalyptus leaves
Dog and human hair
Nail cuttings
Natural fibres
Ripped newspaper and office paper

Don't Add

large amounts of

Meat, bones, poultry and fish
Dairy products
Never add cat or dog poo



Problem	Cause	Solution
Smelly compost	Too much water or green ingredients, poor drainage or anaerobic (no air)	For a quick fix add garden lime, dry material and turn heap. In general, use more brown material to absorb moisture. As a last resort, empty your bin and re fill using layers of green and brown ingredients.
Pests <i>You will have lots of activity in your bin so don't panic about small vinegar flies, slaters, beetles, worms etc.</i>	Ants = too dry	Add water and green ingredients.
	Flies = inappropriate ingredients	Make sure the lid is secure and avoid meat and dairy items. Cover food scraps with a layer of soil.
	Cockroaches = too acidic, anaerobic	Add lime and turn heap.
	Rats / mice = inappropriate ingredients	Secure mouse mesh to the base. Make sure the lid is secure and avoid meat and dairy items. Cover food scraps with a layer of soil.
Just not working	The balance is not right	Make sure you have the mix of green and brown ingredients and enough water—think wrung out cloth wetness. Turn your heap. To speed up the process, add more green ingredients and activators.

Also see our 'How to Worm Farm' factsheet. Visit www.earthcarers.org.au

The Western Earth Carers Program is delivered by the Western Metropolitan Regional Council on behalf of:

