Compost is ready to use when compost materials are reduced to a dark, rich humus. If some larger pieces are not decomposed, you can sift those out

**Composting At Home**

Composting is an easy way to transform your landscape trimmings and your fruit and vegetable kitchen scraps into a dark, crumbly, sweet-smelling soil amendment. Gardeners refer to composting as “turning your garbage into gold” because it saves landfill space, conserves natural resources, and improves soil quality.

and use them to start

a new batch. Compost can be added to the soil at

any time to help keep plants healthy. It improves soil

structure, holds moisture, provides plant nutrients,

and introduces beneficial organisms into the soil.

Here are the most common ways to use compost.

**Soil Amending** Compost can be used to enrich garden soils before planting. Mix 4-6 inches

of compost into newly reclaimed or poor soils. Mix 1-3 inches into annual garden beds each year, or into soil under and around new trees and shrubs before planting.

**Mulching**

By spreading 2 to 3 inches of

compost over the soil around

plants, trees, shrubs and

exposed slopes, gardeners

and landscapers suppress

weeds, keep plant roots cool

and moist, conserve water,

maintain a loose and porous

surface, and prevent soil

erosion.

**Potting Mix**

A potting mix can be made

by mixing one part sand,

two parts compost and one

part soil. Be sure compost is

fully decomposed (black and

crumbly) before using it.

Contact your county’s cooperative extension service for more tips on composting and additional resources.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **SYMPTOMS** | **PROBLEMS** | **SOLUTIONS** |
| Pile not composting | Too dry | Add water until damp as a wrung-out sponge |
| Too much dry, woody material (lack of Nitrogen) | Turn, add fresh green materials or organic nitrogen fertilizer (manure) |
| Pile smells rotten and/or attracts flies | Pile is too wet, or compacted | Turn, add dry materials |
| Non-compostables present | Remove meat, grease, etc. and turn |
| Pile smells like ammonia (sharp odor) | Too much green material | Turn to get more oxygen in pile, add dry or woody materials |
| Rodents in pile | Food wastes in open bin, holes larger than 1/4 inch | Turn compost and rodent-proof your bin by making sure there are no holes larger than 1/4 inch |
| Non-compostables present | Remove meat, grease, etc. and turn |
| Low pile temperature | Pile is too small(less than 3x3x3) | Collect more materials and mixthe new with the old; cover top, insulate sides |

You may also visit one of the statewide home com- posting demonstration sites where various compost- ing methods are displayed and additional informa- tion is available. Contact the Georgia Department

of Community Affairs (DCA) at the address below for site locations. You may also contact DCA for information on training and starting a local home composting program. A list of videos, books and manufacturers is also available.

Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Office of Environmental Management

60 Executive Park South, N.E.

Atlanta, GA 30329

404-679-4940

[www.dca.state.ga.us](http://www.dca.state.ga.us/)

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**In Georgia**

 **Georgia Department of**

 **Community Affairs**

**Home Composting Program**

In Georgia, yard trimmings have been banned from landfills since 1996. Organic waste such as yard trimmings and kitchen scraps represents about 36% of our waste stream. Recycling organic waste is a natural way to reduce the amount of waste going to landfills and it conserves natural resources. ***Composting is Recycling***, it:

 **Saves you money** by lowering garbage bills and replacing the need for commercial soil amendments.

 **Helps your garden and container plants** by improving the fertility and health of your soil.

 **Saves water** by helping the soil hold moisture and reducing water runoff.

 **Benefits the environment** by recycling valuable organic resources and reducing the use of fuel to transport yard trimmings off-site and process them on a large scale.

**Do Compost Do Not Compost**

Grass Clippings Meat

Leaves Bones

Shrub Prunings (chopped) Dairy Products

Flowers Fish

Weeds Greasy Foods

Sawdust Dog and cat feces

Hair Unchopped, woody wastes

Fruit and vegetable Diseased plants scraps Coated paper Coffee grounds/tea bags

Small amounts of uncoated paper

**From No Tech To High Tech**

Heaps, hoops, bins, buckets, and worm boxes can

help fit your composting operation into small spaces.

Choose a structure that is the right size, style, cost,

and effort level for you. Remember to use recycled

materials or containers when constructing your

compost bin.

**Heaps** are the least organized way to compost, but also require the least effort. Simply pile your yard waste and let it sit. If you choose to turn it once in a while it will decompose faster. Otherwise just leave it and in one to two years it will turn to compost.

**Hoops** (usually made

from chicken or hog wire) are

easy and fairly inexpensive

to build, and help keep your

compost pile tidy. Secure the

hoop with hooks or twists of

wire. To speed composting,

undo the hoop, set it up next

to the pile, and turn the pile

back into the cage in its new

location.

**Bins** neatly contain yard trimmings, and when made rodent-proof, work well for com-

posting food wastes. Build with recycled wood, wire, or other materials for an inexpensive and attractive structure. Many styles are

also commercially available.

**Buckets** are the apart- ment-dweller’s answer to composting

food wastes indoors or out.

Used 5 gallon buckets with sealable lids can be obtained free from many grocery stores and restaurants. Stir the compost-soil mixture to aerate it once or twice a week. Be

sure to fill your buckets only half-full for easy stirring.

wastes indoors or outdoors. They are very conve- nient for small spaces and they

give off little odor. Worms typically eat their own weight in kitchen scraps per day, but are picky eaters. They don’t eat

yard trimmings – only fruit and vegetable trimmings. Worm boxes can be made at home

or purchased at the store. The most important thing to remember is to allow for plenty of

holes to provide the worms adequate air to breathe.

The bugs, fungi, bacteria, and worms in your yard

or worm box do most of the composting for you. The

basic recipe for composting is to:

**1. Chop** compostables. The more you chop, the faster the decomposition process will take place.

**2. Mix** two-thirds dry brown material (leaves, straw, shredded wood) with one-third moist, green materials for a balance of nutrients, air and water.

**3. Add** water as you build your pile and maintain its moisture level so your pile is as damp as a wrung-out sponge. Proper moisture is essential

for organisms to break down organic materials into compost.

**No Fuss Compost**

This is the easiest way to compost yard trimmings.

**Ingredients:**

*Yard trimmings, water as needed*

**Directions:**

1. In a heap, hoop, or bin, layer your chopped yard

trimmings as they accumulate.

2. Water so compost is kept as moist as a wrung-out

sponge.

In 12 to 18 months, the material at the bottom and

Sift, and use the uncomposted material to start a new

batch. **Note:** Covering your bin or pile helps control

its moisture content by either retaining moisture

during hot summer months or repelling water dur-

ing rainy months.

**Fast Compost**

The fastest way to compost is to build a “hot” heap,

hoop or bin. This requires frequent turning of

the pile to get plenty of oxygen to the organ-

isms that are hard at work, breaking down the

materials and creating heat. Temperatures

can reach 120-150° F when “fast” compost-

ing is taking place

and this assures

that weed

seeds

and

pathogens are killed. For accurate temperature read-

ings, use an extended-length thermometer which can

be bought at your home garden center.

**Ingredients:**

*Yard trimmings, fruit and vegetable trimmings, and water*

*as needed*

**Directions:**

1. Layer and mix fresh green with dry brown mate-

rials alternately until you have at least a cubic

yard (3 x 3 x 3 foot) pile.

2. Keep pile as moist as a wrung-out sponge.

3. Cover the pile with a sheet of plastic, a piece of

carpet, or a 1” layer of soil.

4. Turn the pile one to three times a week to give it

the air it needs for fast composting.

The compost is ready to use when it has degraded into a rich dark humus. Sift and use undecomposed material to start a new pile. The compost should be ready in 1-3 months.

**Bucket Compost**

This is the most compact way to compost kitchen

scraps; do it in a 5 gallon bucket.

**Ingredients:**

*Kitchen scraps, dry material (soil, sawdust, peat moss,*

*straw)*

1. Chop kitchen scraps and

mix an equal amount of

dry material at least once

a week using a trowel or

small spade. If too wet,

stir in more dry material.

2. Stir thoroughly each time

you add materials.

3. When bucket is 3/4 full,

let stand 1-3 months, mix-

ing it every week or two.

Use finished compost in garden or planters as it is produced.

**Worm Compost** (Vermicomposting) Worm composting is a fun way to turn fruit and vegetable trimmings into a rich fertilizer and soil amendment. This is a popular form of composting for school projects or people with no yards.

**Ingredients:**

*Fruit and vegetable trimmings, newspapers, and red worms*

*To start, use a 2:1 worms to food weight ratio (e.g., 2 lbs.*

*worms to 1 lb. food waste)*

**Directions:**

1. Shred and moisten old newspapers and layer them

6” deep in a well-ventilated plastic or wooden box.

Use black and white pages of the newspaper only.

2. Add worms and begin feeding them your kitchen

scraps (no meat products).

3. Add fresh food waste as it becomes available.

Worm compost can be har- vested in 3-6 months. The compost may be harvested by moving it all to one side

of the bin and adding fresh bedding to the empty side. Then begin burying new food waste in the new bedding.

The worms will migrate to the fresh bedding, allowing you

to harvest the compost they produced.