

From Landfill to Landscape

Your Guide for At-Home Composting



WARNER'S
NURSERY

Composting is nature's process of recycling decomposed organic materials into a nutrient-rich soil—yet another way in which we see that Mother Nature wastes nothing.

Anything that was once living will eventually decompose, and as it decomposes, the energy that was once held within that life is converted into a substance that aids in the growth of new life.

Backyard composting is an acceleration of the same process nature uses. By composting your organic waste you are returning nutrients back into the soil for the cycle of life to continue. Through this process we find that composting, while beneficial to our gardens, is even more beneficial to the sustainability of our ecosystem as a whole.

Why Compost?

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, food is the single most common material sent to landfills. Of the 66 million tons of food waste generated annually in the US, only about 5% is composted. Here are some of the benefits of composting:

1

REDUCES WASTE

LOWERS METHANE EMISSIONS
FROM LANDFILLS

2

3

CREATES A VALUABLE SOIL
AMENDMENT - COMPOST

RECOVERS ORGANIC MATERIALS &
KEEPS THEM LOCAL

4

5

CREATES GREEN JOBS

EXTENDS THE LIFE OF YOUR
MUNICIPAL LANDFILL

6

7

REDUCES SOLID WASTE
MANAGEMENT COST



7 Steps to Great Garden Compost

Building a backyard compost system can be easy and affordable. You will find your comprehensive guide to composting in the list below.

1. Which Type of Compost is Best For You?

This first step to establishing a backyard compost system is to decide what type of compost pile you want and where you want it located.

You can compost in a pile, a trench, or in a contained compost bin. Your compost will need to be placed where you can access it easily, add water, and where it will get sunlight—this will help bring the temperature up so your compost can cook. The nitrogen in the compost makes its own heat, but added sunlight helps bring the temperature up so your compost cooks more quickly.

You will also want to place your compost away from the house, as it can draw critters. We certainly don't want to give skunks a reason to come even closer to your house!

2. High Quality Materials



Every successful compost system requires high quality materials in certain quantities.

For your compost, you will need **brown materials** (carbon materials) and **green materials** (nitrogen materials). You will also need water and a starter batch of microorganisms to get the party started.

To start, you will want a mix of 50% brown, 25% green, and 25% good dirt or compost which should already contain lots of microorganisms that can start digesting your material.



3. Layers Like Lasagna

Layering is very important for your backyard compost. Layer your materials starting with brown materials and ending with some good dirt or compost. Wet your compost bin or pile until it just sticks together, but isn't soaking wet. The air is very dry in Flagstaff, so you may need to add a bit more water to keep it going.

4. Mix It, Mix It Good

About every week or two, you will need to give your compost a good mixing. This ensures that compost gets fresh air and keeps the process moving along. You can stir your compost with a shovel or pitchfork, or if you have a bin, you can roll or spin the bin.



5. Let It Stew

The amount of time needed to produce compost depends on several factors including:

- Size of the pile
- Types of materials used
- Surface area of materials
- Number of times the pile is turned

With frequent turning, compost can be ready in about 3 months, depending on the time of year. In summer, warm temperatures encourage bacterial activity and the composting process is quicker. In winter, the activity of the bacteria slows, and we recommend that you stop turning the pile after November to keep heat from escaping the pile's center.

6. Determine If Your Compost is Ready

Before using your compost, you must determine if it has matured properly. There are Compost Test Kits you can purchase or you can do a DIY germination test by placing seeds in two containers - one filled with compost and the other filled with regular potting soil. If the seeds in the compost germinate within the same amount of time as the potting soil, your compost is ready to use!

7. On Your Mark, Get Set, GO GARDEN!

Use your compost to grow big, beautiful plants! You can even share with a neighbor.

We hope this guide was helpful for planning your backyard compost. Come see us at Warner's Nursery to get everything you need to start your compost today!