

COMPOSTING

Composting is nature's way of recycling organic material. It is a great way to recycle nutrients from our garden clippings, autumn leaves, and other organic materials and to re-use them by making a valuable soil amendment. Compost is often referred to by gardeners as "black gold." By shredding and mixing grass clippings, plant stalks, leaves, twigs, and (where appropriate) kitchen scraps, the rate of decomposition can be sped up. Materials that attract pests, promote disease (such as pet waste), promote weeds (weed seeds and roots), cause odors, or create other nuisances should not be composted. An easy formula to remember is: **"One part green, two parts brown, makes the yard waste turn to ground."** However, even if you don't mix organic material in certain ratios, and don't turn or add water to the pile, it will eventually break down into a rich humus, which is the best soil amendment.

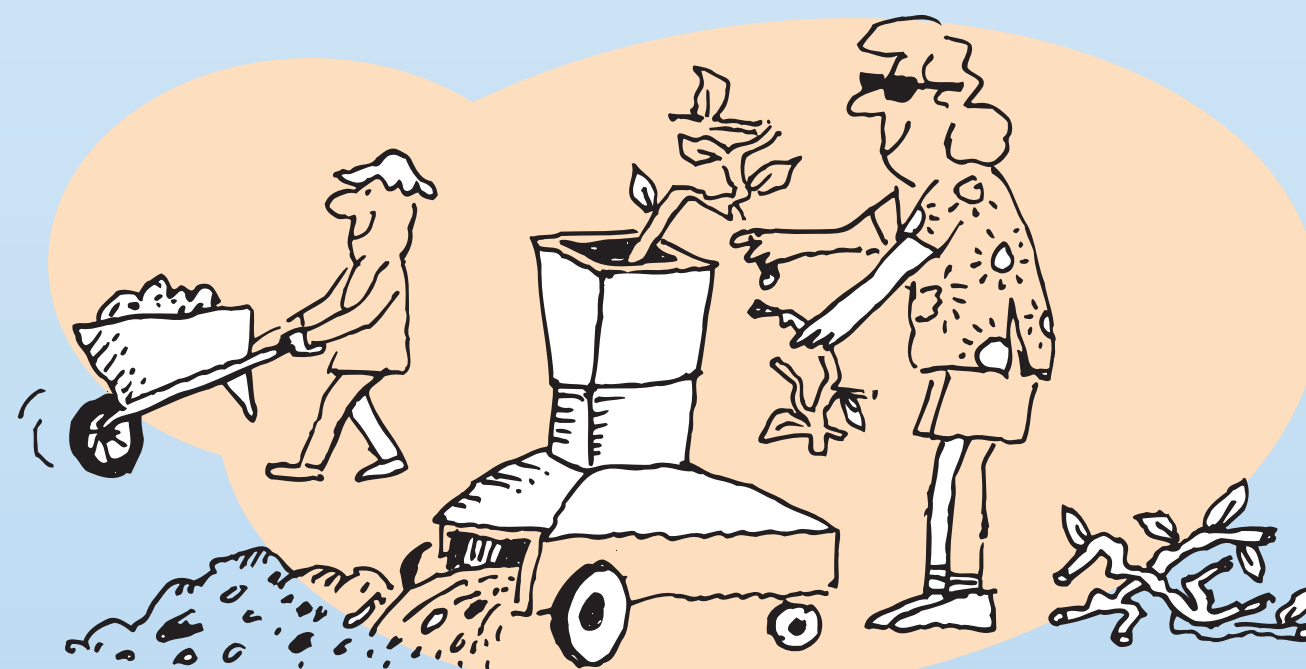
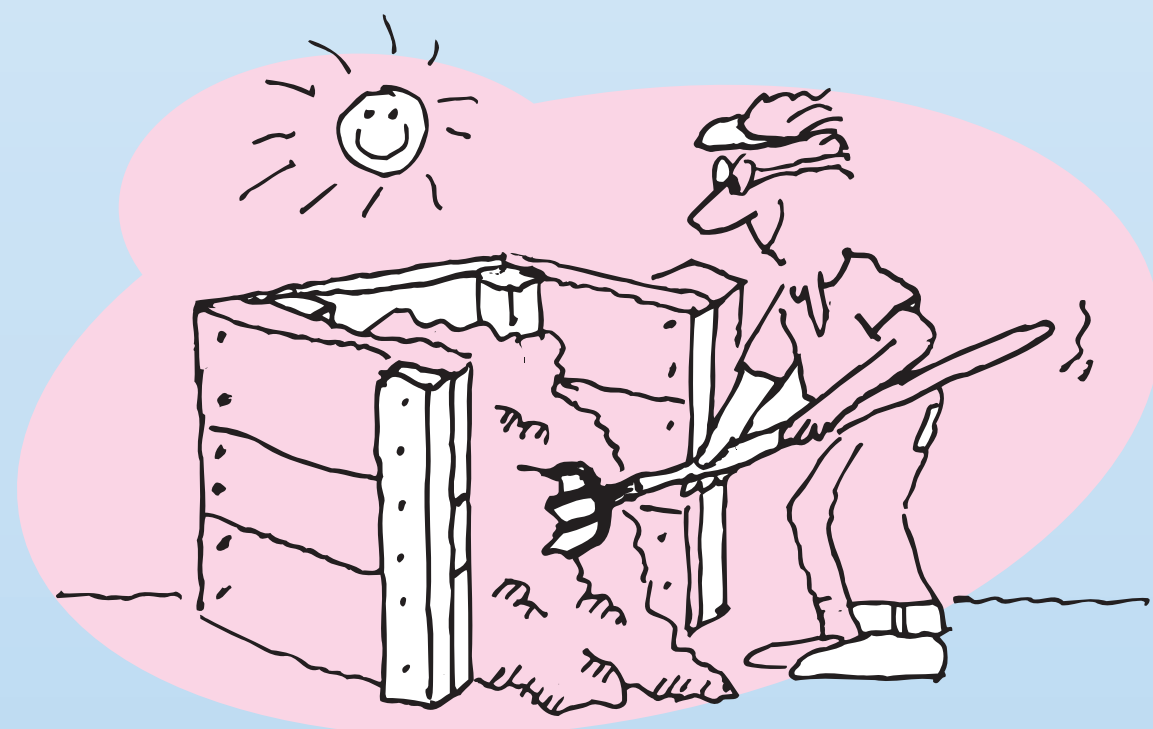
Factors to keep in mind:

- Locate your compost bin or pile in an appropriate area.
- Shredding yard waste hastens decay.
- Nitrogen, e.g., fresh grass clippings, accelerates decomposition, although too much nitrogen can cause odors.
- The pile or bin should be well ventilated. Turning the pile speeds up the decomposition process.
- The compost pile should be kept as moist as a squeezed sponge.

There are a variety of bins which can be purchased, or homeowners can construct their own from recycled wooden pallets or other wood. Another option is a simple compost pile.

A very important benefit of composting is that it saves valuable landfill space. The majority of the waste stream is organic material, which can potentially be composted, either at home and/or at a municipal composting facility.

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