



## Rainbow Gardens Guide to Compost

Compost is the result of organic waste that has broken down due to the process of decomposition. Rich, dark-brown, soil-like material is produced, and can then be returned to the landscape to aid in fertilization, help conserve water, and reduce waste in landfills.

While organic products will create compost naturally if left to break down on their own, you can choose to do a couple of things to make the process even better and quicker than the timeline nature provides.

### What You Need to Start a Compost Bin

1. Structure: This can be a store bought bin, or a DIY made of pallets or other wood. (Make sure you have airflow.)
2. Green Waste: 2"- 4" of "green", nitrogen-rich waste. See our list of products to compost below. Chopping or shredding these items helps with faster decomposition.
3. "Brown Waste": 6" of "brown", carbon-rich waste. Layering "green waste" with "brown waste" seems to work best. You must have enough material (green and brown) to create heat. 3 sq. feet wide by tall is sufficient.
4. Bag of Completed Compost. Spread a layer of compost on top of your layered, organic materials. This helps keep the "cooking compost" from drying out and also contains microorganisms that will kick-start the rest of the composting process.
5. Water your Compost: The compost pile should maintain a damp feel (like a squeezed out sponge) but should not be so wet that water drips from it when squeezed or pressed. Check it often.
6. Allow Time for Compost to Bake. Compost must heat to 90° - 140° in order to begin the "cooking" process.
7. Turn Compost: Turning your compost (pulling material up from the bottom and mixing thoroughly) will speed up the compost process. In ideal conditions, turn your compost weekly and it could be ready in 2 months for use in the garden. Compost left to decompose naturally will take much longer (6-12 months)

### “Green Waste” Compost Products:

1. Fresh Grass Clippings
2. Vegetable Scraps
3. Fruit Scraps
4. Tea Bags and Coffee Grounds
5. Egg Shells (sterilized)

### “Brown Waste” Compost Products:

1. Dead Plant Material
2. Dried Leaves
3. Sawdust
4. Hay
5. Wood Chips
6. Small Twigs
7. Newspapers

DO NOT ADD diseased or insect ridden plant material to your compost.

DO NOT ADD: dairy, meat, animal products, or human waste to compost.

### Extra Compost Tips:

- Compost should not stink. It should have an almost sweet, yet earthy smell.
- If compost pile is stinky (like sulfur), check to see it is not too wet. If it is, turn pile and add more, dry, “brown waste”.
- If pile doesn’t seem to be breaking down, check to see that it hasn’t dried out.

### Composters Found in Nature

- Pillbugs/SowBugs
- Dung Beetles
- Termites
- Flies
- Worms (awesome in compost piles)
- Rhinoceros Beetles (awesome in compost piles)

