composting... nature’s way to recycle can be practiced in your backyard, at work or school, and even indoors if you live in an apartment! All you need to get started is a little bit of space, a bin, and a basic understanding of the composting process. ...it’s that simple!
COMPOSTING

Nature’s ultimate recycling system where living or once-living materials break down into a rich soil-amendment called compost. Compost is a dark, crumbly, and an earthy-smelling form of decomposed organic matter. 

Natural Process — Composting, collecting organic materials and combining them to encourage their breakdown, makes use of the natural process of decomposition to create a high-quality soil amendment. 

Saves Money — Composting can be easier and cheaper than bagging organic wastes and having them removed. Your water bills may drop too, since a soil that’s well-amended with compost holds moisture better and reduces run-off. 

Reduces Waste — Almost 20 percent of the waste stream in Boulder County is plant trimmings and fruit and vegetable scraps that could be recycled as home compost. Recycling organic resources extends the life of our landfills. 

Valuable Soil Amendment — Composting results in a very valuable product. It is more cost-effective to keep materials on site and cycle them back into the yard as a rich soil amendment — your own homemade compost is one that money can’t buy. 

Healthy Garden — Your garden will benefit as well. As the health of your soil improves, so will the health of your plants. 

BUILD your compost pile

A successful compost pile provides food for the compost critters (worms, bugs, fungi, bacteria, and other microorganisms) to break down. This food must be a balance of “green” (often wet) and “brown” (often dry materials).

CHOOSE a bin and a location for your compost pile

There are many different systems and bins that will work for composting. You just need to find the one that works best for you. Options include: an open pile, a bin that you build yourself, or a bin that you buy. Whatever you choose, put your compost pile (if possible):

1) In a shady area to help keep it from drying out
2) Directly on the soil or grass, so compost critters have access to your pile
3) Near the kitchen and garden hose, so you have easy access for adding food waste, watering and turning

What if… Possible Cause Suggested Remedy

Pile not composting

Too dry

Add water until slightly damp and turn

Too much brown matter

Add fresh green matter (see chart above) and turn pile

Pile smells rotten and/or attracts flies

Too wet and/or too many food scraps or lawn clippings

Turn and add brown material (see chart above), particles size of 1-2 inches will keep pile from matting down

Not enough air

Turn it

Animals in pile

Not maintaining or turning pile

Bury foodwastes and keep pile maintained and turned

The compost is damp and warm in the middle, but nowhere else

Pile too small

Collect more material and mix the old ingredients into the new pile

The center of the pile is dry

Not enough water

Moisten materials while turning the pile

Nothing is happening

Pile won’t heat up

May need moisture and more greens such as coffee grounds to kick-start the process again

Start your pile by adding a 4-6” layer of greens, then add a 4-6” layer of browns. Add water and mix. Continue to alternate layers of green and brown materials, followed by watering and mixing the pile. Keep the pile moist as a wrung out sponge.

Greens (nitrogen-rich) Brows (carbon-rich) Do Not Include

- Fresh grass clippings
- Garden trimmings
- Fruit and vegetable scraps
- Eggshells
- Coffee grounds & filters
- Tea bags
- Manure (plant eaters only)
- Dry leaves
- Dried grass clippings
- Hay or straw
- Sawdust
- Shredded paper
- Finely chopped wood chips & bark
- Old potting soil
- Meat, fish, poultry & bones
- Dairy products, oils, grease & fat
- Weeds with seeds
- Cat and dog waste
- Charcoal or Duraflare® ashes
- Treated wood products
- Cat litter

If in doubt, leave it out!

If compost is ready when it is dark brown and crumbly, and when ingredients are not recognizable. Compost provides a long-term source of many nutrients not typically found in Colorado’s soils and helps your soil hold water longer. You can use compost in two stages:

1) Finished

• use as a soil amendment in gardens (anytime)
• use as an ingredient for potting soil
• place around plants, trees, or on lawns as a mulch or top-dressing

2) Partially finished

(when all particles are not completely broken down)
• place around plants, trees, or on lawns as a mulch or top-dressing
• spread compost in your garden in the fall so it will enrich the soil over the winter to help your spring planting

It is something of a miracle to see broccoli stems, orange peels, and fallen leaves change into dark, sweet-smelling earth.

If your compost is too dry... Add water until slightly damp and turn. If your compost is too wet... Turn and add brown material (see chart above).