

FAQS

What is compost?

Compost is the nutrient-rich byproduct of managing the natural decomposers that break down organic—once living—materials. Compost improves water retention and soil structure, and provides food and disease resistance so your plants can thrive.

Why shouldn't I just throw my food scraps in the trash?

Food scraps and other compostable materials can take years or decades to break down in a landfill, producing methane—a potent greenhouse gas—in the process! As of July 1, 2020, Vermonters are required to keep food scraps out of their trash and the landfill. By doing this, we will conserve landfill space, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reinvest the value of these resources through donation to food shelves when possible, feeding animals, or turning them into compost to enrich our local soils.

How long does it take?

It generally takes 6 to 12 months to make compost. Your pile could be low maintenance or you can take steps to speed things up!

Does compost always smell?

A well-built compost pile will produce almost no odors. Food scraps stored in the kitchen may start to smell; empty the container more frequently, or store it in the freezer.

Will my compost attract animals? Like bears?!

Animals are attracted to odors. If you're following the ideal recipe (see inside), your compost pile will produce almost no odors.

Bird feeders are much more likely than a well-built compost pile to attract bears or other critters.



NO SPACE?

Try **drop-off composting** instead: Collect food scraps at home and bring them to any **CSWD Drop-Off Center** or **Green Mountain Compost**. *(Fees may apply.)*

Bonus: You can even include meat, bones, and dairy products—items not recommended for composting at home!



WANT EVEN MORE COMPOSTING HELP?

CSWD provides:

Free composting workshops offered April - October.

Homemade bin designs at cswd.net/composting/backyard-bins/

Compost buckets & pails for purchase to collect food scraps at home and transport them to a backyard pile or drop-off location.



Chittenden Solid Waste District

(802) 872-8100

www.cswd.net/scrapfoodwaste

COMPOSTING AT HOME

How to keep kitchen scraps out of the landfill and turn them into compost instead!



Chittenden Solid Waste District

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HOW TO START

1. Choose a location

Find a site that is convenient for you, even in winter.

2. Choose a bin style

Bins are available at most garden stores, or at a discount from Green Mountain Compost (Chittenden County residents only).

Or build your own container using chicken wire, cinder blocks, or wooden pallets.



3. Gather materials

Use a countertop tub, pail, or bucket to collect food scraps. Label it clearly if others will be using it, so everyone knows what belongs.

4. Build the pile

When your bucket is full, empty your greens (food scraps) into your bin and cover them with 3 times the amount of

browns (leaves). Stick to this ideal 3-to-1 ratio for an odorless and trouble-free compost pile.

5. Feed the microbes

In addition to the right ratio of carbon and nitrogen, your microbes need air and water to turn your foodscrap into compost! Leaves provide air pockets, and food scraps should provide enough moisture.

If progress stalls, it may help to “turn” the pile with a pitchfork or shovel to open up channels for air and water. If the pile is dry, add some water. If it’s too wet, add more “browns.”

6. Let it “cook”

When your container is full, stop adding material and let the microbes do their work. This might take 6-12 months, depending on your conditions.

If you want to speed up the process, you can turn the pile occasionally to add air.

7. Harvest your black gold

It’s ready when it is dark brown, has an earthy smell, and a crumbly texture.

8. Use it!

Work one to three inches of compost into your garden or landscaping bed. Rake a half inch onto lawns.

Place a three-inch layer around shrubs and trees to retain water and nutrients, and to deter weeds.



THE IDEAL RECIPE

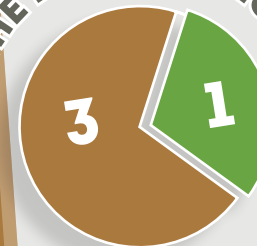
“BROWNS” (Carbon)

Leaves, hay, straw
Dry grass
Newspaper
Cardboard
Paper towels
Napkins

“GREENS” (Nitrogen)

Fruits & veggies
Bread, rice, pasta
Coffee grounds
Tea bags & filters
Egg shells
Peels & husks

THE MAGIC RATIO



Every time you add **GREENS** to your compost pile, cover it with 3 times that amount of **BROWNS**.

Use this 3:1 ratio to get optimal (and odor-free!) results.



Leave these out



No meat, bones, dairy, or oil/fat*



No diseased or infectious plants**



No pet waste



No chemical residue

*Accepted at drop-off locations for commercial composting.

**Check with commercial composting facilities.