



# Composting



Composting is recycling on an organic level. It uses waste that would otherwise be disposed of and turns it into a nutrient-rich soil amendment. Using compost in your flower or vegetable garden improves its health and productivity, provides nutrients, and increases soil moisture, which reduces water demands.

One easy way to start composting is through gathering yard waste. Take the fall leaves, twigs and grass clippings, pile them up, turn them occasionally and ultimately you will have an organic fertilizer. By composting your yard waste, you are also reducing the amount of debris that is flowing into your waterways, improving water quality.

Ultimately, compost and its ability to retain water will reduce erosion, reduce runoff and improve downstream water quality by retaining pollutants such as heavy metals, oils, greases, herbicides and pesticides.



GRDA'S WATERSHED CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Guard the Grand  
GRDA's Watershed Conservation Program

# Composting Components

Branches, twigs, sawdust, wood chips, paper, cardboard, wood ash, dry leaves



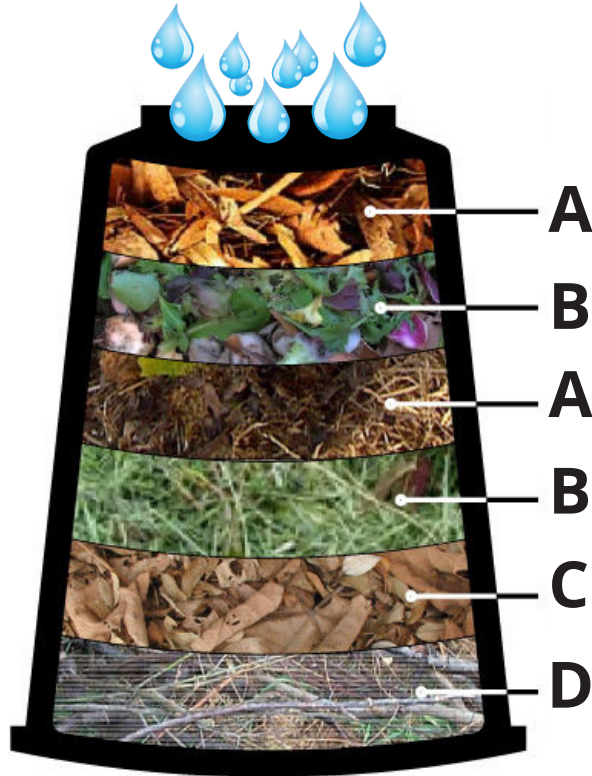
Leaves, grass clippings, fruit and veggie scraps, lint, coffee grounds, tea bags, eggshells



Water



- A** is a **BROWN** layer
- B** is a **GREEN** layer
- C** is a **BROWN** layer with dried leaves
- D** is a **BROWN** layer with sticks



(<https://www.instructables.com/id/Compost-Bin-Low-Cost-Easy-and-Modular/>)

## What NOT to compost

<https://www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home>

Composting takes months of transformation to become useful in a yard or garden. It is important to avoid things that can harm your yard and your home. For example, it is important to avoid pesticide treated yard waste because the pesticides will persist in the compost and will be detrimental when used later on.

- Metal
- Glass
- Coal
- Charcoal
- Pesticide-treated waste
- Diseased plants
- Insects
- Pet waste
- Bones
- Meat
- Fats
- Oils
- Black Walnut leaves
- Dairy products

# 5 steps to make your own compost

<https://www-tc.pbs.org/wnet/nature/files/2013/04/How-to-Compost-Poster.pdf>

**Step 1.** Select the type of compost bin that you want to use and a shady location that will fit its size and shape.



A composting bin can be a metal box, a chicken wire fence, a wood crate or a regular trashcan. The type and the size of bin you need are dependent on how much compost you intend to create.



**Step 2.** Add your organic compost material in alternating layers, which looks like the ABABCD format discussed.

It is important to maintain a ratio of 3:1 for brown and green compost material. That means for every 3 layers of brown, there should be one layer of green. Make sure to not add any pieces that are too large without cutting them up first.

**Step 3.** Make sure to water your compost occasionally, which helps to keep the material moist, but not too wet.



A moist compost bin will help the materials break down organic matter appropriately and in a timely manner. However, if there is too much water, issues like mosquitoes may appear.



**Step 4.** Ensure that the compost is aerated by occasionally turning and moving around your layers.

Air is as important to composting as keeping the soil moist. It ensures the composting process is done in a timely manner. Additionally, when the mixture is aired out, the compost will be less likely to smell bad.

**Step 5.** Wait, wait, wait and enjoy. Ensure that the compost is given enough time to properly enhance your yard or garden.



The process of composting can take up to six months before you are able to use it, which mostly depends on how well the mix is watered and aerated. During the wait time, you may notice your bin letting off some steam and getting warm. THIS IS OK! That means that the mixture is breaking down properly and mixing. When the material is mostly a single color of brown and without any obvious remnants of individual materials, it is ready to use.

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: What happens if I use my compost before it is finished?**

A: The unfinished compost may steal nutrients from the plants that you are trying to grow instead of providing nutrients to them.

**Q: Will my compost smell bad?**

A: The smell will not be intrusive if it is properly aerated. If you do smell something, then you may need to add wood chips and re-aerate.

**Q: I've heard that you can use worms to compost, is that true?**

A: Yes! That is called vermicompost and can be effective with recycling food scraps and other organic material. For more information on that method, see <http://www.homecompostingmadeeasy.com/wormcomposting.html>.

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Guard the Grand is an educational program with the goal of fostering an ethic of environmental stewardship in Oklahomans residing in watersheds that flow into Grand Lake O' the Cherokees.

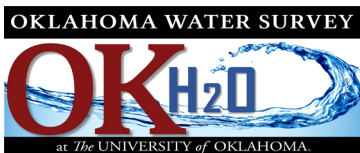
**Guard the Grand**  
420 Hwy 28, PO Box 70  
Langley, OK 74350  
<https://www.grda.com/guard-the-grand/>  
[guardthegrand@grda.com](mailto:guardthegrand@grda.com)

Publication written by:

*Jennifer Salvo*

*Jeri Fleming*

*Jason Vogel, Ph.D., P.E.*



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