



Residents' Guide to Home Composting



Learn how to create and maintain a
healthy home compost system



The environment says thank you

If you wish to setup and keep an effective compost system in your home, the **Residents' Guide to Home Composting** will help you achieve just that.

It provides simple steps that guide you on where to start and what your options are, how to maintain a healthy compost heap and how you can utilise its nutrient-rich goodness.

Composting green waste and food scraps is an effective way to:

- minimise your waste to landfill – which is great for the environment
- control odours
- create your own fertiliser that helps maintain a healthy garden.

Learn how to **Compost in a Bin** on page 2 and how to implement **Bin-Free Composting** on page 7.

We wish you all the best on your home composting adventure.

For more information, visit cleanup.org.au/au/LivingGreener or contact Council's Customer Service Centre on 5220 7111 and ask to speak with the Waste Management Coordinator.



Option 1: Compost in a bin

Step 1: Choose a container

You may have purchased a compost container through Council, which is a premium quality variety from the company ReIn, sold at-cost to residents.

However, if you wish to purchase your container elsewhere, it's important that it has holes for ventilation. The holes allow oxygen into the compost which speeds up the decomposition process. Alternatively, tumblers are a fast way to break down compost materials. The compost can be easily turned to keep it aerated and minimise odours.

Step 2: Choose your site

The optimum location for a container is in a well-drained, semi-shaded area in your garden. A combination of sun and shade ensures that your compost does not dry out too quickly or break down too slowly.

Handy tip

It's also important that your compost bin is positioned somewhere that can be easily accessed, making it simpler for you to add daily scraps.



Step 3: Learn what you can and can't compost

Green material

- Vegetable scraps, fruit peelings and cores
- Weeds (before they seed or flower)
- Herbs
- Coffee grounds
- Tea bags
- Hair and fur
- Animal manure (horse, cow and poultry are all suitable)
- Seaweed
- Fish bones
- Dead flowers.

Brown material

- Shredded paper, newspapers and uncoated cardboard
- Lawn clippings
- Dried leaves
- Saw dust (untreated wood only)
- Wood shavings and chips (untreated wood only)
- Wood ash
- Hay or straw
- Peat
- Vacuum cleaner dust
- Small twigs and shredded hedge clippings
- Egg shells
- Crushed sea shell.

Do not add the following to your compost heap

- Meat and dairy products
- Magazines
- Diseased plants
- Citrus fruit peels
- Large branches
- Metals, plastic, glass
- Animal fat, bones or droppings from meat-eating animals
- Weeds that have seeds or underground stems
- Bread, cake or other grain products as they may attract mice.

Step 4: Gather your materials

Collect organic waste from your kitchen in a compost caddy or container of some sort. You can purchase compost liners at selected supermarkets and hardware stores which line the containers. Once the container is full or after a couple of days, empty the contents (including the liner) into your compost bin using the layering methods listed below.



Step 5: Layer your compost

Layer your compost like a lasagne; starting with a thick layer of coarse material, such as twigs and mulch. Follow with a thin layer of food scraps, then a layer of green grass clippings or other ‘greens’ such as leaves or weeds and finally a layer of manure. From here, you repeat the layering method to create a layered stack.

Don’t forget to add some soil to your layers as this hosts the organisms that will help turn the material into compost. It’s also important to make sure you don’t overfill your compost heap.

Handy tip

Too much green material will result in a mix that is too slimy because of the nitrogen. Too much dry and brown material, which generates the carbon contribution, will delay the breakdown. A balance of dry materials and moisture is your way forward to a healthy compost heap.

Step 6: Maintain your compost

Each time you add food scraps, add a layer of dry material such as brown leaves, shredded newspaper and a layer of manure or fertiliser.

Once a week or so, add a bucket of water to the compost. All living creatures need water, even the micro-organisms, so keep your compost moist but not dripping wet.

It's also important to add air to the compost so it doesn't smell. You can do this by turning the compost with a garden fork or spiral tool, or by placing an aeration pipe or two into the heap.

Step 7: Mature your compost

Making compost can take as little as a couple of months or as long as a year. The timeframe depends on factors such as your mixture, volume of waste, weather, frequency of turning and other factors. A lot of these are within your control. For example you can cut down the waste to as small as possible (like with a wood chipper), ensure the mixture is not too wet or dry and undertake regular turning.

For static bins (non-rotating bin) the waste at the bottom would be ready first as it has been there the longest. For rotating bins, it will be ready at the same time as it is constantly being mixed. For this sort of bin you will need to stop adding new waste in order for the compost to mature.

When the waste has turned into a dark, crumbly material like soil and has a natural earthy smell then your compost is ready.

Handy tip

Avoid rodents by securing lids to your compost bins – these come with your purchase.

Step 8: Make the most of your compost

For a static composter you can collect the waste from the hatch (or hatches) at the bottom of the bin. The waste at the bottom may be ready first as it has been in there longest. Alternatively you can lift or tilt the entire bin and gather the compost.

For a turning bin, there are several options depending on your preference and the style of bin. You can place a bucket (if it fits) or a tarp and open the door and turn the drum around for the compost to fall out. You can also scoop it out while it's rotated to the side.

Your nutrient-rich compost can be mixed into the soil or placed above the existing soil. You can also use it in planters outside or around the house.



Option 2: Bin-free composting

This method simply requires a trench or hole in your garden. To establish an effective bin-free compost heap, follow the following steps:

1. Begin layering the compost heap by adding organic material such as vegetable waste, grass, garden debris and small twigs to the compost bin. Keep the layer between 6-8 inches thick.
2. Add material that has a dry-to-wet composition of approximately 3 to 1. The carbon to nitrogen (brown to green material) composition should be equal.
3. Add a 1 to 2 inch layer of activator on top of the organic compost layer. Homemade activators include fresh animal manure, spoiled fruit or vegetables, high-protein dry dog food or blood meal
4. Moisten the activator layer lightly with water. Do not saturate or make the compost soggy.
5. Place a 1 to 2 inch layer of garden soil on top of the activator. Do not use a sterile potting soil or garden soil that is treated with insecticide.
6. Repeat the layering process until the hole is full by adding organic material followed by a homemade activator and layer of soil. Cover the top with carpet.

To avoid attracting rodents to your compost, place at least four inches of soil over the compostables.

To help aerate, insert a piece of agricultural pipe (available at Bunnings) in the middle of your hole. Turn your compost once every 2 weeks – outside to the middle.

