



Compost Pile

Make your own mulch from your yard and kitchen waste!

Provides: Food, shelter

Supports: Toads, birds (insectivorous and worm-eating, raptors), small to medium-sized mammals (mice, chipmunks, rabbits, fox)



A **compost pile** is a human-created pile of organic materials like grass clippings, leaves, and kitchen waste (fruit, vegetables, and coffee grounds) that takes advantage of natural decaying processes to transform waste into a mulch that can be used to fertilize or condition soil. Compost piles can provide shelter for smaller wildlife species that may burrow into the pile, and food for a variety of wildlife. Some wildlife (i.e., chipmunks, voles) may eat the compost material while other wildlife (fox, hawks) will be attracted to the pile because of prey species.

Implementation Steps:

1 **Pick a location** – An ideal location sees about half-sun over a 24-hour period. Complete shade will slow down decomposition, while full sun could lead to a dried-out pile. Select a location that can be easily accessed.

2 **Build a structure to house the compost pile** – If you opt to take this route, make sure the compost itself remains in direct contact with the ground. This allows naturally occurring decomposers to access the pile, increasing the rate of breakdown while increasing the availability of this valuable food resource.

OPTIONAL

3 **Start layering!** – Add different types of organic materials in relatively thin layers.

4 **Continue to add material and maintain the compost pile** – Depending on how much you add, you'll need to mix or turn the pile between every 2 weeks to every 5-6 weeks. This helps introduce oxygen to the system while also mixing around fresh and fairly decomposed waste scraps.

Additional Tips:

- Keep in mind that your neighbors may not appreciate the beauty of decay, and there may even be neighborhood ordinances that restrict compost options. Be aware of these limitations and consider improving the aesthetic quality of your pile with some creative planting (tall flowers or a vine trellis for example).
- No meat or dairy products should be thrown onto any compost pile to avoid attracting unwanted wildlife like raccoons. Additionally, these materials do not decompose easily.
- A self-enclosed or fenced off compost pile will limit access if wildlife (i.e., raccoons) become a problem.
- In the colder months, consider covering your compost pile with a tarp to help it retain heat.



Oregon State University



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Other Resources:

- University of Wisconsin Extension factsheet about making and using compost in the garden
learningstore.uwex.edu/Assets/pdfs/A4021.pdf



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