

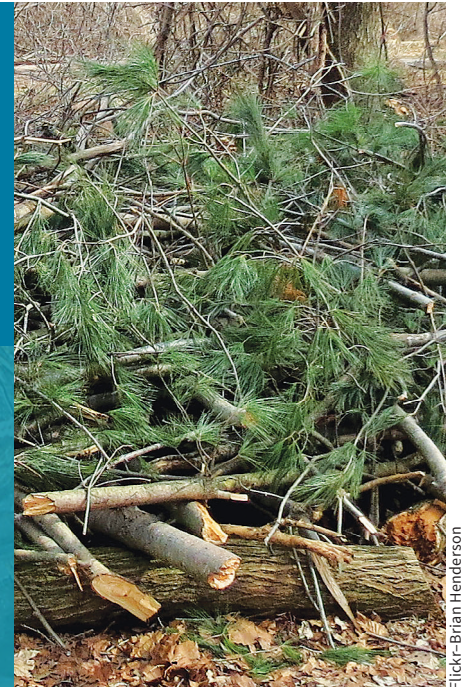


Brush Piles

A brush pile is a deliberate pile of woody material to provide shelter. Wildlife use brush piles and the spaces within them for hiding, resting, foraging, and raising young.

Provides: Shelter, food

Supports: Birds (flycatchers, small songbirds, juncos, sparrows, woodpeckers), small- to medium-sized mammals (chipmunks, shrews, mice, rabbits), reptiles and amphibians (salamanders, toads, snakes)



Building a brush pile is cheap and easy – everything you want in a weekend landscaping project!

Implementation Steps:

- 1 Collect your Materials** – Your materials are as basic as logs, stones, small branches and brush. PVC pipe can also be used to add additional tunnels throughout the structure.
- 2 Location, location, location** – Building your brush pile away from your home will reduce potential fire hazards. It will also limit wildlife from finding your home more appealing than the brush pile and looking for a way into your house. Try to position brush piles where there is currently a lack of shelter.
- 3 Construct your brush pile** –
Step 1: Establish the pile's base with logs (up to 6-10 ft. in length, 4-6 in. in diameter) in a "log-cabin" style stack. The key is to stack and crisscross logs in a manner that is both sturdy and porous so animals can move throughout spaces between logs. Numerous passages and crevices are desirable.
Step 2: Add branches to the interior of the structure. Start with larger limbs and add increasingly smaller-diameter limbs. Pile the wood at various angles so that branches interlock and add stability to the pile.
Step 3: Cover with brush until the pile is 6-8 ft. tall. At this stage, you are constructing the brushy top, so weave smaller materials together to the extent possible to create a roof of privacy and protection from the elements.
- 4 Maintain your brush pile** – Rot, decay, and deterioration are all natural processes in brush piles. Inspect your brush pile annually, adding brushy cover and supportive limbs at the base as needed.

Good Neighbor Policy

Be aware of local and community ordinances. Some communities forbid brush piles. Additionally, your neighbors may not fully understand the benefit of brush piles and may even find them to be an eyesore. Be sensitive and notify your neighbors if the brush pile will be highly visible. If you are concerned, try adding an aesthetic element to your brush pile. Native vines such as wild grape, honeysuckle, and trumpet creeper will blanket a brush pile with an attractive display of greenery and flowers. Alternatively, construct the brush pile in a part of your yard that is not easily visible to neighbors.



Other Resources:

- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – guide to building and locating your brush pile, as well as a description of different types of brush piles.
dnr.wi.gov/files/pdf/pubs/wm/wm0221.pdf
- National Wildlife Federation – a general overview of brush piles, with a focus on urban environments.
www.nwf.org/How-to-Help/Garden-for-Wildlife/Gardening-Tips/Wildlife-Brush-Shelters.aspx



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