

What is Composting ?

Composting is the natural decomposition process during which organic materials (kitchen scraps, grass and leaves) break down and create a nutrient-rich soil amendment called "humus." Composting is Nature's way of recycling.

Why Compost?

Home composting allows you to manage your waste on your own property by turning it into a useful end product. It is also an effective way to cut down on the amount of kitchen and yard waste that you put at the curb. The kitchen scraps that you would normally throw away can be combined with your leaves and other yard debris to make a wonderful, natural fertilizer.

What to Compost ?

Compost:

Fruit & Vegetable Scraps
Citrus Rinds, Apple Cores
Corncobs
Stale Bread & Grains
Dry or Cooked Pasta (Plain)
Plain Popcorn
Coffee Grounds & Filters
Paper Tea Bags
Eggshells
Peanut Shells & Nutshells
Rabbit, Chicken, Cow & Horse Manure
Garden & Grass Clippings
Leaves, Twigs, Bark, Vine & Wood Chips
Shredded Paper & Newspaper
Paper Towels & Cardboard Rolls
Toilet Paper Cardboard Rolls

DO NOT Compost:

Meat, Poultry, Fish or Seafood Scraps
Fats, Grease, Lard, Oils
Bones
Dairy Products
Cat or Dog Waste
Treated or Painted Wood
Coal or Charcoal Ash
Yard Trimmings treated with Chemical Pesticides



See Composting "At Work": Schedule a Tour of the Galloway Township Community Garden

During this tour, you will see different makes/models of compost bins at work. Some may even be available for purchase by Galloway Township residents. Please inquire about any composters or rain barrels for sale at the Office of Sustainability.



Each of the garden beds and our large pollinator bed feature Eco-Soil compost generously donated by the ACUA each season. A testament to the richness of this finished compost can be seen in the overall size, volume, variety and health of the featured plants and visitors like birds, bees, butterflies and other wildlife.

Home Composting Workshops are available.

For more information, please contact the
GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP
OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY
www.gtnj.org
609-652-3700, ext 209

 **Go Green Galloway**

GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP

Guide to Home Composting



Where to Start?

First, select an area of your yard that is conducive to composting. This should be a spot that receives equal amounts of sun and shade throughout the day. Next, choose what to compost in—if anything. Many ready-made bins are available for purchase, or you can build your own. You can even create a simple open-air pile often called a “hot pile.”

Arranging Your Bin or Pile

For best results, mix equal parts “brown” (or carbon-rich) material and “green” (or nitrogen-rich) material. Brown material is often dry matter like twigs, dry leaves, and nutshells. Green material is often wet matter like fruit peels, vegetable ends and grass clippings. To help materials break down (or decompose) more quickly, reduce larger-sized items to smaller-sized portions. Water is important, but often rain is sufficient. Air is also important, so the materials should be aerated or turned on a regular basis—especially when the weather is hot.



Some Helpful Hints:

- ✿ Heat speeds up decomposition, so black compost bins often make faster compost than open-air piles. Cover an open-air pile with black plastic film to help accelerate the process.
- ✿ Do not compost meat, fats, bones, oils or dairy products. These create odor and attract pests.
- ✿ If your compost has an odor, it may be too wet with too much “green” (or nitrogen-rich) materials. Sprinkle some garden lime sparingly and then balance the mixture with dry “brown” (or carbon-rich) materials like wood chips.
- ✿ If your compost has an odor, it may not be getting enough air and ventilating/aerating it may be necessary. In lieu of aerating materials by turning them with a pitchfork, you can poke rods into a compost pile to make air passages.
- ✿ If your compost is too dry, add a little water or more wet “green” materials as you turn the pile.

When is the Compost Finished ?

Your compost is ready when the mixed materials have decomposed and become “humus” - a dark organic matter that looks like soil and has an earthy, clean aroma. You can use this finished product in a variety of ways. When added to vegetable gardens, it is a source of non-toxic fertilizer. When added to flower gardens, it helps to retain the moisture in the soil. Lawns built with compost will drain better and demand less water. A ring of compost around a tree will help to feed its root system.

What More Can I Do To Be Green Besides Compost?

Quite simply, you can reduce your lawn area. Instead of large expanses of lawn that can be costly and laborious to maintain, plant native gardens that are locally-adapted and require less water, fertilizers and pesticides. They also benefit wildlife by providing food sources and diverse habitat.

Grass: “Cut it and Leave it” Program

The best thing you can do for your lawn is cut the grass and leave the grass clippings. By doing so, you achieve several things:

- ✿ You return nitrogen to the soil, creating a healthier lawn
- ✿ You lower the water requirement of the lawn
- ✿ You save time and energy by not bagging grass clippings
- ✿ You save money by not buying harsh chemical fertilizers
- ✿ You save money on yard waste disposal
- ✿ You reduce the amount of waste entering our landfills when you combine this practice with home composting

The Process:



A mulching mower is ideal, as it grinds the grass clippings into a fine spray that filters down through the lawn and reaches the soil, but a regular mower can be used if you mow more frequently. Even with a mulching mower, you should only mow the top third of the lawn, leaving grass height between 2.5”-3.5” high. The higher the grass, the healthier the lawn, as tall grass will shade the soil, cool the roots and block weed growth.

What About Thatch ?

Lawn experts agree that grass clippings will not contribute to thatch problems. Thatch is formed by the accumulation of dead roots and stems. The more you fertilize and water your lawn, the faster it grows and the faster thatch accumulates.

A Sample “Recipe”

6 parts	Dry Leaves	Browns
3 parts	Food Scraps	Greens
3 parts	Fresh Grass Clippings	Greens

ADD: Water + Air (an occasional turning)