

Garden Compost Explanation And Tips

Every wonder why some of the world's most beautiful natural gardens are found in the most remote places? It's because Mother Nature has done all the work! When you want to create a garden that's naturally lush and vibrant -- without resorting to harsh chemicals -- use nature's perfect fertilizer: garden composting.

Compost provides natural fertilization for all types of plants, from leafy shrubs and trees to exotic flowers. Consider the rainforest, with a thick carpet of naturally-occurring compost. This rich rainforest floor gives continues food, support and shelter for all types of plant life.

Creating your own perfect compost is easy. All you need to do is save your food scraps and yard waste. You'll save money on garden center supplies, reduce waste and feed the environment. It's a win-win-win situation! With a little effort, you'll have a dark, crumbly and nutritious mixture of decomposed organic matter.

Creating garden compost is so easy to do, and just wait till you see how many ways it can benefit your blooms:

- * Provide essential nutrients to plants
- * Reduce the need for harsh fertilizers
- * Improves the quality of heavy clay or sandy soil
- * Reduces the amount of water required
- * Helps to control pesky weeds

Creating Garden Compost

There is a very basic recipe for creating garden compost. Just remember the gardener's rule of thumb: two parts brown to one part green.

Your successful compost pile will be a bustling community of microorganisms. These are tiny creatures that exist by breaking down organic matter. They'll work hard to turn your yard debris and organic scraps into compost and you'll need to take an active role in encouraging the growth of these microorganisms.

Use natural flower fertilizers that are two parts carbon-rich "brown" materials, such as dried leaves. Mix this with one-part nitrogen-rich "green" materials, such as grass clippings. The end result will be an all-natural fertilizer that's the perfect fuel for those hungry populations of microorganisms. Before long, they'll be heating up your yard debris and producing valuable garden compost.

Ingredients

Your "two parts brown" may contain any combination of the following materials:

- * Dried leaves and grass clippings
- * Twigs and small sticks
- * Shredded newsprint
- * Straw or hay
- * Wood chips, shavings and sawdust
- * Old potting soil

The "one part green" may include one or more of these healthy materials:

- * Green grass clippings
- * Fresh, green leaves
- * Plant stalks and stems
- * Hedge clippings
- * Annual weeds (without the heads!)
- * Fruit and vegetable scraps
- * Tea bags, coffee grounds and filters
- * Clean egg shells

These materials should NEVER be used in your compost:

- * Sick, diseased plants
- * Weed seed heads
- * Invasive weeds (quack grass, morning glory)
- * Cereal grains and bread
- * Meat or fish parts or bones
- * Dairy products
- * Cooking oil or grease, or oily foods
- * Pet feces
- * Dead animals

Size Matters

Smaller composting components bring about rich, usable compost more quickly. Large pieces of vegetables obviously take longer to break down than smaller pieces. Leftover fruits and vegetables should be chopped into small pieces. Garden debris can be cut up with shears or a machete. A garden chipper, shredder or lawnmower mulching attachment is a handy tool for breaking up sticks and twigs.

For even faster garden compost action, your compost pile should be no less than three feet in diameter. Size is important, because the actual composting occurs from the heat generated by those millions of microorganisms living in your soil. As they process the raw materials, they release energy that helps to activate the decomposition. A compost pile of at least three square feet is the best size for hotter, faster composting.

Water and Air

Compost is a living thing, and it needs water and air to survive. The microorganisms in your garden compost can't do their jobs if they don't receive an ample supply of water and air. Regularly sprinkle water over your compost, but don't drown it. Make it about as wet as a damp sponge.

To incorporate air into the mixture, use a pitchfork to turn the compost materials one every week. This can also help to distribute the efforts of the microorganisms. If you don't turn the compost, you'll have a rich layer of compost at the bottom of the pile, and a heap of dry garden waste on top.

If you're looking for gardening advice, take it right from the source: Mother Nature herself. It's easy to make your own garden compost, and your bright, beautiful plants will be more than enough payment for your efforts.

About the Author

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