

nyc compost project tip sheet

get all the dirt at www.nyc.gov/wasteless/compostproject

Funded and managed by NYC Department of Sanitation's Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse & Recycling.

The NYC Compost Project provides compost education and outreach through host sites in all five boroughs. Educational programs include: compost-related workshops and classes, on-site composting demonstrations, compost helpline, and composting technical assistance.



What to Compost

Mix roughly equal parts (by volume) of high-nitrogen **GREENS** and high-carbon **BROWNS**.

Without enough greens, a pile will decompose slowly; without enough browns, the pile may develop an unpleasant odor. In general, it's better to err on the side of too many browns. Chop up bulkier materials. To avoid odors or pests, bury food scraps under browns.

Two other ingredients—water and oxygen—are needed to ensure that your compost pile transforms itself into a mound of black gold.

Add equal parts GREENS and BROWNS

GREENS

fresh, moist, nitrogen-rich materials

FROM YOUR GARDEN

- green plants and garden trimmings
- fresh leaves and flowers
- grass clippings (or recycle by leaving on the lawn)



FROM YOUR KITCHEN/HOME

- fruit and vegetable scraps
- coffee grounds & tea bags
- manure and bedding from animals that **ONLY** eat plants



BROWNS

dead, dry, carbon-rich materials

FROM YOUR GARDEN

- fall leaves, small twigs, and woody prunings
- dry plant material
- straw and hay
- pine needles
- potting soil



FROM YOUR KITCHEN/HOME

- bread and grains
- egg shells
- nutshells
- corncobs
- food-soiled paper towels and napkins
- shredded newspaper
- sawdust and wood shavings (from untreated wood)
- stale beans, flour, and spices
- wood ashes



Materials to avoid

FROM YOUR GARDEN

- pesticide-treated plants or pesticide-treated grass clippings
- diseased or pest-infested plants
- poison ivy
- invasive weeds
- weeds with seeds
- large branches (call 311 to schedule a special removal)
- non-compostable materials such as sand or construction debris

FROM YOUR KITCHEN/HOME

- meat or fish scraps
- cheese or dairy products
- fats, grease, or oil
- cat or dog feces; kitty litter
- colored or glossy paper
- sawdust made from pressure-treated plywood or lumber
- coal or charcoal ashes
- non-compostable materials such as plastics, metals, or glass

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Compost Troubleshooting Guide

SYMPTOM	PROBLEM	SOLUTION
rotten-egg odor	Excess moisture and not enough air (anaerobic conditions).	Turn pile frequently; add dry Brown material such as autumn leaves, woodchips, or newspaper. Make sure bin has drainage; leave lid off to allow more air to flow.
		
ammonia odor	Too much Green, high-nitrogen material (such as food scraps, grass clippings).	Add Brown, high-carbon material (such as autumn leaves, woodchips, shredded newspaper, straw).
slow decomposition	Lack of moisture.	Add water while turning pile.
	Lack of air.	Turn pile; add aeration tubes.
	Lack of nitrogen; too much Brown, high-carbon material.	Add material high in nitrogen (more Greens), such as food scraps or grass clippings.
low pile temperature <i>(If you have a small pile, or if it is very cold out, don't be concerned if your compost is not generating heat; decomposition is still occurring, but at a slower pace.)</i>	Pile too small.	Increase pile size (space permitting).
	Insufficient moisture.	Add water while turning pile.
	Poor aeration.	Turn pile; add aeration tubes.
	Lack of nitrogen.	Add more Greens (material high in nitrogen), such as food scraps or grass clippings.
	Cold weather.	Increase pile size, or insulate pile with straw or other material.
high pile temperature (over 140°F, 60°C)	Pile too large.	Reduce pile size.
	Insufficient ventilation.	Turn pile.
unwanted pests	Wrong materials in the pile.	Avoid meat, dairy, and fatty foods.
	Food scraps are exposed.	Make sure food is well covered.
	Bin isn't rodent-resistant.	Make bins more rodent resistant by adding hardware cloth to areas where animals could get through. Add a screening barrier vertically 6 to 8 inches into the ground; keep pile moist; turn pile more often to increase temperature and disturb nesting.