

Five good reasons to compost

1. **Composting is easy.** This is a practical way to recycle your yard trimmings and organic kitchen scraps.
2. **Compost is all natural.** No need to worry about adding chemicals to your lawn and the negative effects they may have on you, your children or your pets. Adding compost to your garden soil reduces the need for fertilizers, helps regulate soil pH, and improves moisture retention.
3. **Composting helps save money.** You will reduce your reliance on lime, fertilizers, herbicides and other chemicals when you have a steady supply of your home-grown compost available. If you live in a community where you must purchase special bags for leaf and yard waste, you will no longer spend money on those bags. If your hometown charges you to dispose of leaf and yard waste, you will again save money.
4. **Improve the environment.** Healthier plants improve the atmosphere by making oxygen.
5. **Save landfill space.** If everyone composted, naturally decomposing organic matter would not waste space in the Central Landfill, preserving that space for non-organics.



RHODE ISLAND
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CORPORATION

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The Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) is a non-profit, quasi-public agency that was created by the General Assembly in 1974 to serve the solid waste management needs of the state. RIRRC is dedicated to reducing reliance on landfilling through resource conservation programs such as waste reduction, recycling and composting.

Printed on recycled paper, of course. 1-02



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Composting Made Easy



What is composting?

Composting is a natural way to recycle yard trimmings and some food scraps that would otherwise be sent to the landfill. Composting changes these materials to produce a beneficial product you can use on your lawn or in your flower beds and vegetable gardens. About 25%–30% of the waste created in the home and garden is compostable organic material.

How does it work?

Composting is the decomposition of organic material that occurs constantly in nature. The process produces compost (also called "humus"), a nutrient-rich material that fertilizes, improves and conditions soil. Compost is a dark, earthy-smelling material that consists mostly of decayed organic material.



What can I compost?

Any organic material will break down, but not everything belongs in your compost pile.

DO USE

Browns (high in carbon)

- leaves
- untreated wood chips & sawdust
- small amounts of evergreen needles
- paper towels & tissues
- dead flowers
- woody yard trimmings (twigs, small branches)
- small amounts of fireplace ash
- vacuum cleaner bag and contents
- straw
- corn stalks and husks

Greens (high in nitrogen)

- grass clippings
- plant & yard trimmings
- non-meat/non-dairy spoiled foods
- vegetable and fruit peels, cores, rinds & scraps
- egg shells
- pumpkins
- coffee grounds, filters & tea bags

DO NOT USE

- diseased plants
- weeds that are heavily laden with seeds
- grease, fats
- barbecue briquettes
- meats, fish & poultry
- bones
- dairy products, oily foods
- cat litter
- dog wastes

How much time is needed to compost?

A low-maintenance compost pile may require as little as five minutes per week, which is less time than it takes to bag the leaves or clippings and haul them to the curb. A composting connoisseur may wish to spend 10-20 minutes a week and produce compost faster and of a finer texture.

How long does it take to produce compost?

The composting process can take as little as one month or as long as 12-24 months. Factors include the size of the pile, the type of compost bin, techniques used, seasonal temperatures, the balance of brown and green materials (carbon to nitrogen ratios), and moisture levels. In the spring and summer, you can make compost regularly for your garden provided you have enough brown materials and you monitor your pile's oxygen and moisture levels.

Can you compost in the winter?

Yes! Continue to add materials (such as food scraps) throughout the winter. The decomposition process will slow down, and in the coldest weather you may only be able to add kitchen scraps to the layers of a frozen pile. But don't worry – your pile will become active again once the temperature rises.

Will the compost pile smell?

A compost pile that is working well should have a pleasant, earthy smell. If it has an unpleasant odor, it is generally caused by having mostly greens and too little browns or by having large clumps of greens inside an otherwise well-balanced pile. Aeration is necessary to correct odors. Break the pile apart and thoroughly blend browns and greens. If necessary, add more browns.

Will composting attract pests?

If the organic materials are well mixed and do not contain animal products (such as meat) your pile will not attract pests. It's a good practice to always cover the pile with a layer of browns. If you do experience (or are worried about) problems with pests, eliminate food scraps from your pile.

Here's how to compost:

1. Place your container in a level spot on the earth where there is good water drainage and adequate sunlight.
2. Add organic materials: Use both nitrogen-rich "green" materials, and carbon-rich "brown" materials. The ratio should be about 3 to 4 parts browns to one part greens. This ratio can vary – just make sure not to overload your pile with greens. For example, when you add kitchen scraps or grass, also add some dry leaves. Cover food scraps with brown materials. Save some autumn leaves and add them gradually to your pile during the rest of the year. Chip or shred larger materials into smaller pieces to speed the decomposition process. Large woody material will take longer to decompose. Don't add too many greens at once. Leave grass clippings on the lawn to add nutrients.
3. Add water. Keep the pile moist but it should not be dripping wet. Materials should feel damp, like a wrung-out sponge. Use a cover to keep the pile from becoming too wet during heavy rainfall. If it does get too wet, turn the pile and add more dry materials such as leaves.
4. Turn the pile over with a pitchfork, shovel or an aerating tool. Introducing oxygen evenly will help the pile decompose faster.

For more info contact us at 401-942-1430 x775 to purchase compost bins and supplies at wholesale rates. Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation staff can advise you on composting techniques and offer additional free written materials about composting.

You may also request any of the following brochures free of charge:

- Where Do My Recyclables Go? – A map of the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF)
- Are You In Control of Your Mail?
- You Can Make A Mountain Into a Molehill – A Guide to Reducing Waste
- Backyard Composting Resources
- Vermicomposting
- What to Recycle
- Recycling Coloring Book
- Drop-Off Recycling at the Central Landfill
- Household Hazardous Waste brochure
- How to Set-Up a Workplace Recycling and Reduction Program brochure
- Maximum Recycling VHS starring Pamela Watts & MaxMan
- MaxMan CD/ROM – A virtual tour of the RIRRC facility



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