

The Scoop ON COMPOST



What is compost? Compost is **organic matter** (plant parts, vegetables, fruits, food scraps, etc.) that has been broken down. Organic matter can be broken down by organisms like insects and earth worms, but the composting superstars are **microorganisms**, the teeny tiny creatures that live in our soil. Microorganisms eat organic matter, breaking it down, and create compost as a result.

Why should we compost? Compost is rich in nutrients and acts like a natural fertilizer to feed our plants (it's plant food!). Compost helps to improve soil health by returning valuable nutrients to the soil. Using compost means that we don't have to use harmful, unnatural fertilizers that may hurt our environment. Composting also helps to recycle our food scraps and paper, instead of sending them to the landfill!

How do we compost? In order to create successful compost, you need "brown" material and "green" material. Brown material is old, dead organic matter that is high in carbon. Green material is fresh organic material that is high in nitrogen. To compost, add **1 part green material and 1 part brown material** to maintain a healthy balance. If your compost is wet and stinky, add more brown. If it is dry, add some water and/or green.

What should we compost? We can't compost everything—only organic matter. Organic matter is made up of natural things, like plant and animal parts. Not all organic matter should be composted, though! Use the chart below to help you decide what you should and shouldn't compost.



Good "Green" Compost	Good "Brown" Compost	DO NOT COMPOST!
Fruit and vegetable scraps	Dead, crunchy fall leaves	Meat or bones
Coffee grounds and filters, tea bags	Straw	Dairy products
Egg shells	Corn stalks	Fats and oils
Other food scraps	Shredded paper, newspaper	Bread
Fresh grass clippings	Shredded cardboard	Pet waste
Fresh plant clippings	Untreated woodchips and sawdust (sparingly)	Glossy paper or colored paper

When you compost, make your green and brown material as small as possible so the microorganisms can break it down easier! Crush your eggshells, shred your paper, crush your dead leaves, etc.!