



# What is composting?

Composting is nature's recycling system - it is the process of decomposition of organic matter into a soil-like material called 'compost'. The decomposition process occurs as a result of the activities of beneficial microscopic organisms like bacteria and fungi and other living creatures such as worms and slaters in soil.



## Why compost?

Composting at home is an inexpensive way to transform your kitchen and garden waste into a valuable and nutrient rich food for your garden. It's easy to make and use.

Benefits of composting include:

- Reduction of waste disposed to landfill - approx. 40 - 60% of household waste is compostable
- Reduction of the production of methane - a powerful greenhouse gas
- Enrichment of soil health
- Improvement of soil structure and its capacity to hold water
- Increases disease resistance in plants
- Significantly reduces dependence on artificial fertilisers and pesticides
- Can save you money!

## What you *can* compost?

Most organic material can be composted. You will produce beautiful, nutrient-rich compost if you add layers of a diverse range of both green (nitrogen-rich) and brown (carbon-rich) ingredients to your compost bin.

Check out our list of kitchen and garden wastes that **CAN BE ADDED** to your compost below.

### ✓ Nitrogen-rich Kitchen Wastes (Green)

Fruit scraps, vegetable peelings, house plant cuttings, coffee grounds, rice and pasta, egg shells, tea bags, vacuum dust, hair



### ✓ Carbon-rich Kitchen Wastes (Brown)

Coffee filters, bread, paper napkins and towels, clothes dryer lint, hair, egg cartons, torn up pizza boxes



### ✓ Nitrogen-rich Garden Wastes (Green)

Flowers, vegetables, plant trimmings, hedge clippings, grass clippings, chicken or cow manure



### ✓ Carbon-rich Garden Wastes (Brown)

Leaves, straw or hay, small twigs, mulch, dried grass and weeds



## What *not* to compost?

It is recommended that you do not compost animal products. Although these items can be composted they can cause problems if not composted correctly.

Check out our **DO NOT** compost list below.

✗ Meat, fish or bones

✗ Dairy products

✗ Oils or fats

✗ Chemicals

✗ Dog, cat or human faeces

✗ Diseased plants

✗ Mature weeds with seeds



## Setting up your compost bin

1. Position your compost bin or heap in a well drained place.
2. Place some fine chicken wire under the bin, fold up the sides and tie. This stops vermin digging into your bin. (This is not needed for the tumblers)
3. Start with a bottom layer 20-30 cm deep of coarse, carbon-rich garden waste like small twigs and sticks, and mulch - sugar cane mulch is highly recommended. This material allows good drainage and aeration. Water the bottom layer well
4. For your initial batch of compost, add 2-3 shovels of good soil from your garden. This adds the essential living organisms to your compost
5. Add your food scraps. The compost process is aided if you chop up bulky items such as watermelon rinds, and corn cobs before you place them in your kitchen tidy bin
6. It is important to add the nitrogen rich green waste in similar proportions as the carbon rich brown waste
7. Mix all the materials in the compost bin with your aerator or turn the tumbler after each addition
8. Check the moisture - add water if required to make moist - but not soggy
9. Always cover food scraps on the surface with a couple of handfuls of carbon-rich material like leaves and mulch. This helps to reduce flies in the compost bins. (This is not needed for the tumblers)
10. Cover the surface of the compost with a compost 'blanket' e.g. a damp hessian sack or newspaper. This keeps the compost moist and dark for the worms and other living organisms. (This is not needed for the tumblers)

## Maintaining your compost

Always follow the A.D.A.M. principles while composting:

### A - Aliveness

Compost is a living system full of worms, bacteria, fungi, microbes and other critters that eat their way through your organic waste.

### D - Diversity

Include a range of ingredients to get a balanced and nutrient rich compost.

### A - Aeration

Keep your compost aerated by turning regularly. Air is important for the beneficial bacteria in your compost and helps to keep smells at bay.

### M - Moisture

Moisture is needed to keep compost alive and to help it break down faster. Keep your compost moist but not soggy for the best results.

- Add a handful of other ingredients like chook manure, vacuum dust, and hair regularly.
- When the compost bin is full it needs to be left to mature for 6-8 weeks. Keep the bin contents moist and aerated by mixing regularly. This helps to break down the waste and stops the methane gases
- If you have a second compost bin, start building a new compost.
- With the tumblers add to one bin only until it is full before starting the second. Turn the tumbler daily for 14 days, then the compost will be ready for use.

