

Garden compost



 Alternatives

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The benefits of composting

- ✓ In composting, organic matter is broken down by the activity of micro-organisms to produce good-quality fertilizer.
- ✓ Compost eliminates toxins, balances pH and promotes soil drainage.
- ✓ Compost releases nutrients and promotes biological activity in the soil that vegetable plants need.
- ✓ Compost added to clay soils improves drainage and soil aeration.
- ✓ Compost structures sandy soil by increasing its water retention capacity and slows soil erosion.



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Illustrations: Robin Clugston


ALTERNATIVES
nourrir la citoyenneté

How to compost

Choose a composter and set it up

The box requires two openings:

- **One on the top** so compostable matter can be added
- **One at ground level** to retrieve the mature compost

The lid must be big enough and at the right height so the compost can be stirred with a fork or stick.

It has to have a sufficient number of air holes that are big enough so air can circulate, but not too many so the compost doesn't dry out (approximately 4 cm [1.6 in] in diameter).

The cover is essential to limit evaporation and excess moisture.

You can place your composter directly on the ground, in a slightly shady spot, where it is sheltered from the wind and easy to reach.

Air, water and organic matter: a winning combination for successful compost

These three ingredients are the foundation of good composting.

1 Air

The micro-organisms that break down the organic matter need air to work. For good compost, you need to stir, mix and alternate types of organic matter to facilitate aeration and prevent rot.

2 Water

Organic matter needs moisture to break down. Check the moisture level of your compost often; it shouldn't be too wet or too dry.

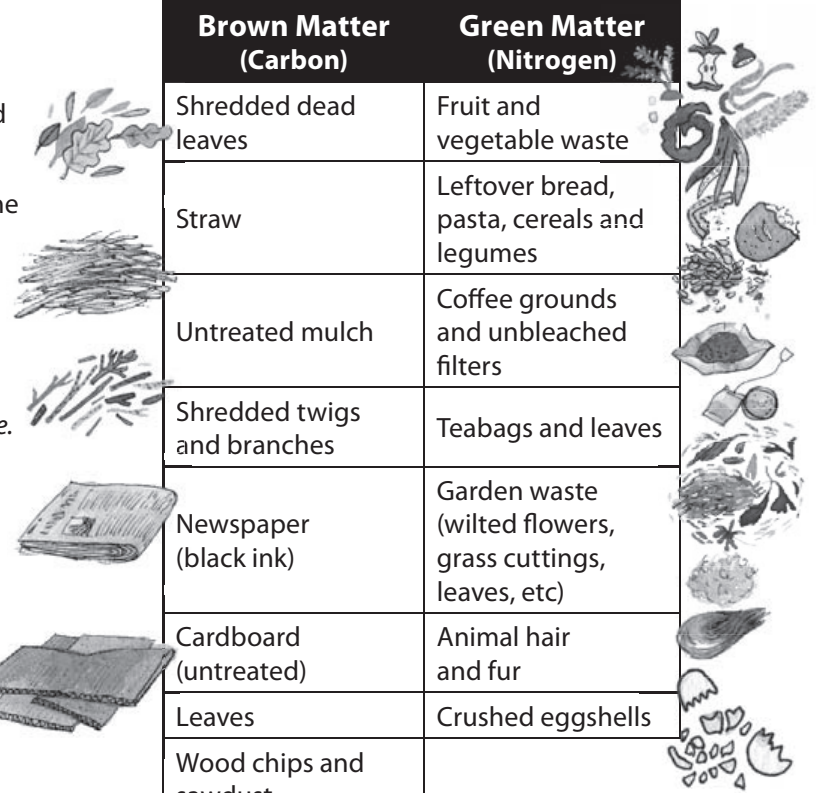
To check the moisture level, take a handful of compost and squeeze it. No water should leak out, and it should **stick together** to form a ball.

In fall, collect dead leaves (brown matter) for the following year.

3 Organic matter

You need two parts brown matter to one part green matter.

Brown Matter (Carbon)	Green Matter (Nitrogen)
Shredded dead leaves	Fruit and vegetable waste
Straw	Leftover bread, pasta, cereals and legumes
Untreated mulch	Coffee grounds and unbleached filters
Shredded twigs and branches	Teabags and leaves
Newspaper (black ink)	Garden waste (wilted flowers, grass cuttings, leaves, etc)
Cardboard (untreated)	Animal hair and fur
Leaves	Crushed eggshells
Wood chips and sawdust	



The following items do not belong in household composters:

- Dairy products, meat, fish and bones
- Oils and fats
- Sick or infected plants, and weeds that have gone to seed
- Animal litter



Materials to avoid:

- Plants and weeds that have gone to seed
- Plants treated with pesticides



After 4 to 12 months, your compost will be ready to use. It should look like fresh earth, be uniform and without lumps and have a pleasant earthy smell. You can now spread it on your vegetable garden. Refer to the *Organic Fertilization* pamphlet to learn more about how to use it.