

EAST GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL



HOME COMPOSTING



WHY SHOULD I COMPOST?

The National Food Waste Strategy (2017) revealed these facts:

- Households lose between \$2,200 and \$3,800 per year due to food waste
- 7.3 million tonnes of food is wasted in Australia every year
- \$20 billion is lost to the economy through food waste each year

Composting is a natural process in which organic matter breaks down to form nutrient rich humus, which improves soil properties and therefore plant health. The great thing about composting is that it can happen anywhere, any time. Whether you're living on a farm or in an apartment, there's a solution for you.



Find more information on composting online:

Sustainable Gardening Australia (sgaonline.org.au) or
Gardening Australia (abc.net.au)



HEALTHY SOILS =
HEALTHY FOOD =
HEALTHY PEOPLE

COMPOSTING OR WORM FARMING?

Worm farms do a great job in recycling food scraps. So, if that is the main source of organic waste in your household, use worms.

Compost works best if you have large amounts of grass clippings, garden weeds, old hay or straw plus food waste as well.

COMPOST

The basic rule is layering carbon-rich and nitrogen-rich materials in regular intervals. The carbon layer is generally twice as thick as the nitrogen-rich layer (around 15cm and 7-8cm respectively). Add water with every layer as well, you need to create a moist environment (but not too wet either).

Carbon-rich materials:

Straw, hay, paper, cardboard, deciduous tree leaves, sawdust

Nitrogen-rich materials:

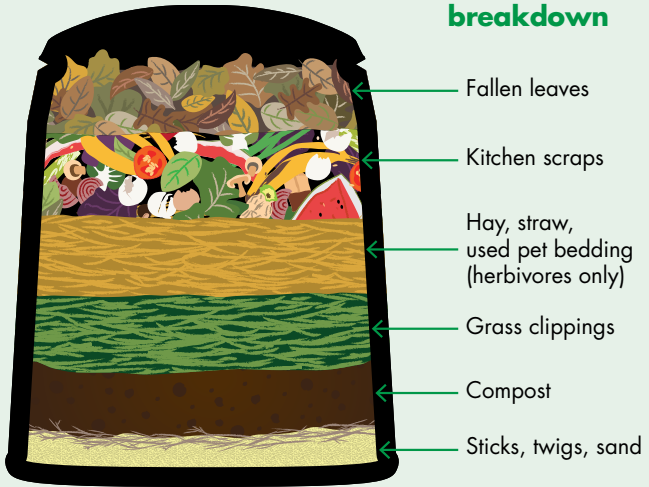
Food scraps, fresh weeds, fresh grass clippings, chicken or livestock manure.

Rapid (hot) composting:

Perfect for people who have big gardens with lots of green waste and need compost for food production. The common nitrogen ingredients used in this composting system include veggie crops being pulled out (and are still green), animal manures and mixed food waste. While for carbon, you'll often use straw or hay, all ingredients are chopped or mulched up to ensure the composting process is rapid!



Compost breakdown



Compost Bins - cold (mesophilic) composting:

Occurs when the compost system is smaller than one cubic metre. Carbon and nitrogen materials are added gradually, meaning the whole process of composting generally takes longer.

Compost tumblers work on similar principles, they can save you the hard work of aerating and layering materials, as they all get mixed as you go. They also prevent any rodents getting in.





WORM FARM

Worm farms can be set up in different ways:

- Trays on top of each other
- Single tray/box (or old bath!), ideally with two or more separate sections and some drainage
- A worm bin with ventilation
- A bucket buried in the ground

Basic rules of worm farming: provide the worms with some bedding – moistened coir, shredded cardboard, sawdust mixed with soil or mature compost. The bottom of the tray/bin needs good drainage, avoid waterlogging. Add your chopped food scraps to the top or to one side of the vessel and try to add some moist soil as well. It is beneficial to put a wet hessian cloth on top as well, to keep everything damp and cool. As worms break down the food, collect the worm castings and drain the worm juice (tea) from the bottom and add to your garden! Don't overfeed your worms – if the food scraps are getting smelly, you are probably putting too much in. Maybe you need to slow down and wait for the worms to reproduce or get a bigger worm farm!

WHAT TO PUT IN?

Try to mix nitrogen-rich and carbon-rich materials, although you can have a higher nitrogen content than in compost (about 10:1 – 15:1 carbon : nitrogen ratio in worm farm). Sprinkle some garden lime or dolomite lime on every month or so.



EGGS AND EGG SHELLS



FRUIT AND VEGGIE SCRAPS
– JUST AVOID TOO MUCH
ONION, GARLIC AND
CITRUS PEELS



SMALL AMOUNTS OF
MEAT, DAIRY – JUST KEEP
AN EYE OUT FOR VERMIN
AND FOUL ODOURS



GRAINS – OLD BREAD,
PASTA, RICE, ETC.



PAPER TOWELS, SHREDDED
CARDBOARD, NEWSPAPER



GREEN WEEDS –
EXCLUDING THE PARTS
WITH SEEDS, AS THEY WILL
SURVIVE IN A WORM FARM



CHICKEN LITTER,
LIVESTOCK MANURE (BUT
NO DOG OR CAT MANURE!)

WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY COMPOST?

- **Breeding maggots:** Remove any meat or excess food. Add a sprinkle of garden lime and cover with a layer of carbon such as a hessian or wool blanket.
- **Really smelly:** It may be too wet and likely to be anaerobic (not enough air). Mix in more carbon materials, turn and add a touch of garden lime which will help bring it back into balance. Alternatively, you may have overloaded your compost system with too much food waste. Remove some and start a second compost system to cater for the amount of food waste you're producing.
- **Infested with ants:** Your compost system is probably too dry or has exposed food. Add water if dry and cover any exposed food scraps on top of the system with carbon and hessian/felt. You can also turn the compost if in a compost bin or pile.
- **Taking too long to break down:** It may take several months for the organic waste to decompose, especially if you are cold composting. However, if you think it is taking too long, try to add more nitrogen-rich materials and water. You can also try to pull apart and rebuild the compost pile to improve the balance of carbon and nitrogen.



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