

THE WCR LEARNING COMMUNITY

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An organic garden grown with compost
PHOTO - LAFAYETTE COLLEGE / CC, FLICKR

Simple steps to composting

What is compost?

Nature makes compost naturally all the time. Leaves, grass, and branches die and pile up. Slowly they turn into dirt. That dirt feeds the living plants. It is called compost.

People make compost by piling garden and kitchen waste in piles, bins, or barrels. It's easy to make! Feed your plants with it. It is satisfying to see how well plants grow.

Why compost?

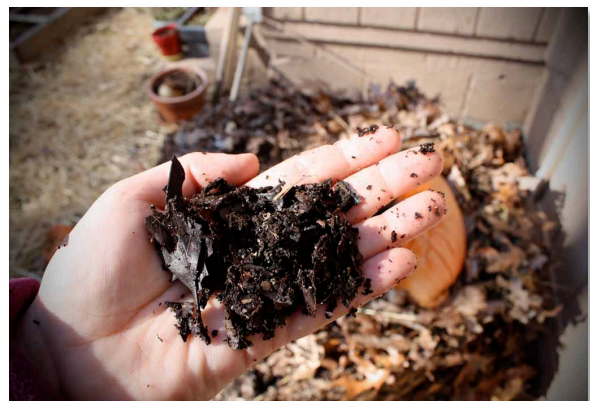
1. Composting helps our environment.

Throwing less away means less waste. That is good for the environment. Almost one third of the garbage we throw away could be turned into compost.

2. Compost is good for the soil.

Weeds, leaves, grass clippings, vegetable peels, and other organic waste can be composted. The compost is added back into the soil. The compost helps to make the soil richer. It is sometimes called "black gold".

Compost acts like a sponge. It soaks up water when it rains and releases water when the weather is dry. This is good for the soil and the plants.



Finished compost looks like black, loose soil.
PHOTO - AMBER KARNES / CC, FLICKR

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3. Compost helps keep plants healthy.

Insects and diseases do less damage if the soil is full of compost.

The dark colour of compost draws the sun. The sun heats the soil. The soil gets warmer earlier in the spring and stays warmer longer into the fall.

4. Compost adds nutrients to the soil.

Compost contains important nutrients. The plants absorb these nutrients from the soil. This makes the fruits and vegetables you grow healthier and tastier.

Adding compost to the soil is the best thing you can do for your garden. You will see the results in your vegetables and your vegetables, flowers, shrubs and trees.



A lush balcony garden grown with compost
PHOTO - MADLYINLOVEWITHLIFE / CC, FLICKR

How do I compost?

1. Decide on a place for a pile or a bin.
 - a. If you live in an apartment, ask your landlord where you can put one.
 - b. If there is no place to put one, put your waste in a green bin for the city to pick up. The city will make compost from it.
2. Build or buy a compost bin. A compost bin is simply a 4-sided enclosure. The bottom is open so worms can move up into the compost.
3. Fill the bin with organic material. Add waste from your kitchen and garden.
4. Add kitchen scraps, leaves, grass, garden clippings in layers.
5. Compost likes to breathe. Turn the pile over regularly, about once a week or so.
6. Compost likes to be moist. Water your compost to keep it moist.
7. The compost is ready to use when it is crumbly, dark, moist dirt.
8. Spread the compost on your garden.

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Exercise

Start composting

1. Watch the video, *Simple Steps to Composting*. The link to the video is on our *Westcoast Reader* website.
2. Create a place to pile your compost. Build or buy a bin.
3. Put your organic waste in the compost pile or bin regularly.
4. Turn it and keep it moist.
5. After four to six weeks, stop adding and turning. Let it sit for a couple more weeks.
6. If the compost is not crumbly and dark, let it sit some more.
7. When it is finished, put it in your garden. Pile it around the base of your plants.
8. Take time to sit in your garden and enjoy the results!

Links

Go to *The Westcoast Reader* website for links to more information and videos.

www.thewestcoastreader.com