

Composting is an ideal form of recycling and a great alternative to burning or landfilling vegetative waste. Composting returns nutrients to the soil that are essential for healthy conditions in which plants thrive. Composting is a direct enhancement to air quality in Lake County because it reduces the amount of smoke from leaves and lawn trimmings being burned. Instead of burning--compost! And receive the double rewards of clean, enjoyable air AND rich healthy soil.

COMPOST MATERIALS

Organic matter including yard waste such as leaves, lawn trimmings, weeds, straw, hay and garden residues can be successfully composted. Be sure to add a source of nitrogen, such as a small amount of manure or rich soil, to help the composting process. Household waste which can be included in your compost include fruit and vegetable trimmings, egg shells, coffee grounds, wet paper bags and newspapers. Meats and fats are not recommended.

CONSTRUCTION

In order to keep your compost neat, there are a variety of enclosures you can use. Some simple guidelines for your compost bin- it should be no less than 3ft.x3ft.x3ft. to retain the heat needed for composting, construction material can be wood, cinderblocks, chicken wire, pallets or whatever is available to you.

Your enclosure should have one open or removable side to allow for easy access to add and turn organic matter. If space is a problem, you can use a trash can or barrel; be sure to put holes in it to allow aeration of the compost.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Recipe for Compost

12" compost material, such as leaves, straw & prunings cut in 6-8inch lengths
4" nitrogen rich material like grass clippings, kitchen scraps & manure
Dash of calcium source like egg shells or cold wood ashes
1-2" soil
Repeat layers until desired height, between 3-5 feet.

Cover your compost pile with dirt or straw then water. Keep the pile moist, but not soggy. For rapid composting, turn the pile twice in the first two weeks, once a month after that or less often if you are not in a hurry. As decay commences, the right consistency is warm, moist and crumbly.

Suggestions to speed the process: inserting poles during layering and removing them when your pile is high enough is beneficial for aeration. Shred compost material to speed decomposition time. This can be done with shredders or hand clippers.

WHEN TO USE COMPOST

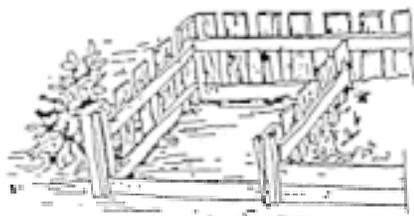
A good time to apply compost is in the spring just before tilling or working the soil. This way the organic matter is worked into the soil. Also apply compost in the middle of the growing season when plants need nutrients. Apply at least 1-3" of compost per year to your garden.

Compost can be used to enrich the flower and vegetable garden, to improve the soil around trees and shrubs, as a soil amendment for houseplants and planter boxes and, when screened, as part of a seed-starting mix or lawn top-dressing. Before they decompose, chipped woody wastes make excellent mulch or path material. After they decompose, these same woody wastes will add texture to garden soils.

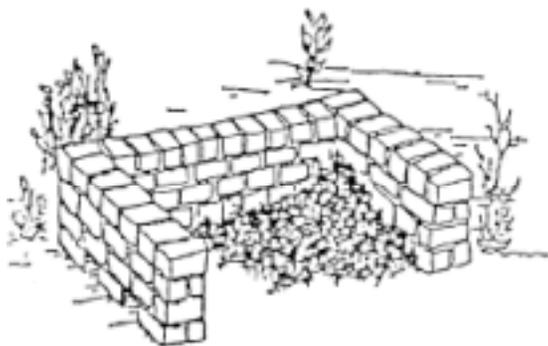
For areas with limited space, a trash can may be used as a compost container. Be sure to put holes in it for aeration.



With a double bin, materials may be transferred from one side to the other. This stimulates aeration.



Bins may be constructed with bricks or cement blocks. Permit airflow by leaving openings around bottom. Leave one side open for easy access to compost.



By using compost you return organic matter to the soil in a usable form. Organic matter in the soil improves plant growth by helping to break heavy clay soils into a better texture, by adding water and nutrient-holding capacity to sandy soils, and by adding essential nutrients to any soil. Improving your soil is the first step toward improving the health of your plants. Healthy plants help clean our air and conserve our soil, making Lake County a healthier place to live.

For more information, try these references:

The Rodale Guide To Composting, Jerry and Marjorie Hunt, Rodale Press, Emmaus, PA.
Backyard Composting, by Harmonious Technologies, Harmonious Press, Ojai, CA
Compost Happens, Video by W. Burkhead, 2175 East Lake Dr., Kelseyville, CA 95451



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COMPOSTING



A SIMPLE WAY TO KEEP
LAKE COUNTY
AIR CLEAN

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