

Compost Bin

What is it?

Compost bins break down food and garden waste. They are ideally suited for medium to large backyards and for households that produce both food and garden waste. The finished compost can be added to garden beds and pot plants and will add valuable nutrients, improve the structure of your soil, increase water retention and reduces the need for chemical fertilisers.

What you need

Compost bin – these can be bought from Council at a discounted rate in a range of sizes or from some garden and hardware stores. There are a variety of sizes and designs. You can also make your own compost bin for a DIY project.

Compost turner – this can be a stick, shovel garden fork or a compost turner. Compost turners can be purchased from Council at a discounted rate when purchasing your compost bin, or from some garden and hardware stores.

Space – compost bins are suited to large yards with sunlight and good drainage. They will need to be installed on a flat surface.

Compost materials – there are two types of compost materials: green materials and brown materials. A mixture of these two materials is needed for your compost. To get the balance right, add two parts brown materials to one part green materials.

Greens (Nitrogen rich)

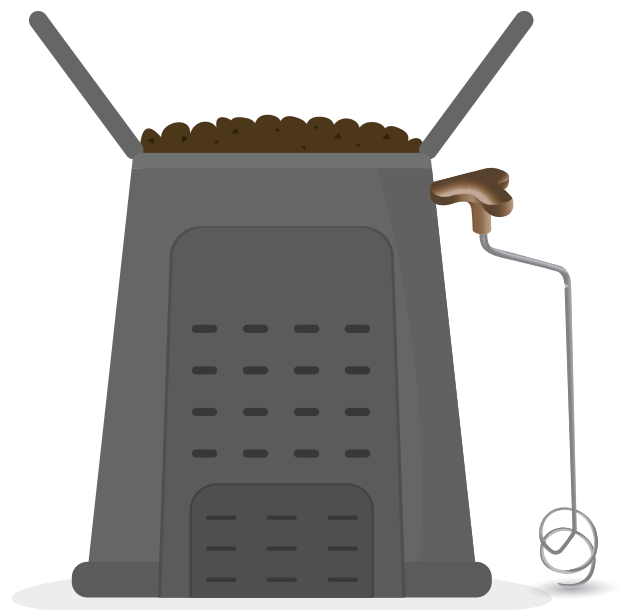
- Grass clippings
- Leaves and garden prunings
- Fruit and vegetable scraps
- Coffee grounds
- Tea bags and leaves
- Egg shells
- Manure (horse or cow)

Browns (Carbon rich)

- Dry leaves and twigs – keep twigs small and avoid larger branches.
- Paper and cardboard – try to avoid glossy paper and cardboard. Egg cartons, toilet paper rolls, newspaper and plain brown cardboard boxes are best.
- Newspaper
- Dry grass clippings
- Hay and straw
- Pet and human hair

Avoid

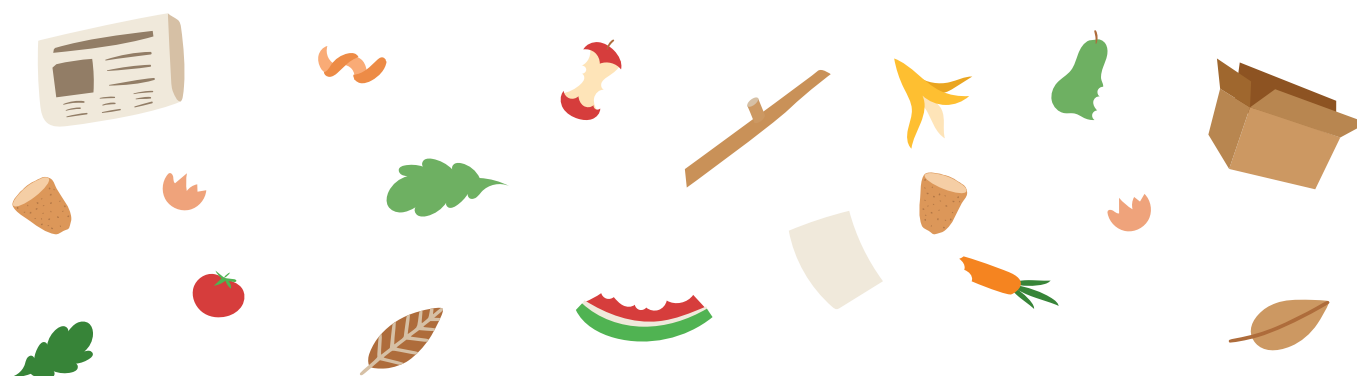
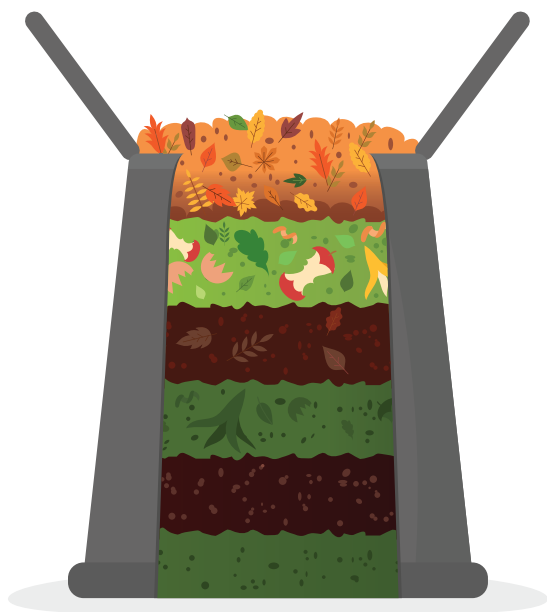
- Meat, dairy and grains
- Fatty or oily foods



How to get started

- 1 Position your chosen compost bin in a sunny spot in your yard, in contact with the ground and in an area that has good drainage.
- 2 Start off with a layer of twigs, dried leaves or shredded paper or cardboard. This will help to keep your compost bin aerated and will provide good drainage.
- 3 Next you can start adding your compost materials, remembering that well balanced mix of green and browns.
- 4 Compost bins need oxygen to work. Aerate and mix your compost at least once a week. You can use a stick, garden fork, shovel or a compost turner.

Keep an eye on your compost bin, make sure it is not too wet or too dry. Compost bins can take anywhere from six weeks to six months to produce matured and finished compost. Finished compost should smell earthy, be dark brown and look like soil. The finished compost can be mixed in with potting mix, spread straight into your garden beds, or spread around the base of plants.



Troubleshooting tips

A simple method that you can remember for how to keep your compost thriving is the **ADAM** principle.

A is for **AERATION**. Compost bins require lots of air, so remember to mix and turn your compost at least once a week.

D is for **DIVERSITY**. Make sure you are adding a mixture of green (wet) materials and brown (dry) materials. Remember – two parts brown to one-part green.

A is for **ALIVENESS**. Most of the work in your compost bin is being done by microscopic bacteria and fungi. A good indication of your compost bin working well is seeing insects, worms, critters and evidence of bacteria, such as white fluffy mould.

M is for **MOISTURE**. Your compost needs to stay damp as a wrung out sponge for the insects and bacteria to thrive. Too dry? Add some more fresh fruit and vegetable scraps or some grey water. Too wet? Add plenty of brown materials to help soak up excess moisture.

If you don't have a good spot with direct contact to the ground, compost tumblers are another great alternative. The steps to setting up and maintaining a tumbler are similar to an on-ground bin; just leave out the starting layer of sticks and twigs. Follow the ADAM principle, balance your greens and browns and keep that tumbler turning!

More information



For more information on how to purchase a discounted composting system and for other fact sheets, visit:

www.maroondah.vic.gov.au/DiscountCompost or scan the QR code.

Did you know Council run regular workshops? To find out more, visit: www.maroondah.vic.gov.au/Waste-Education