

## Composting for the Beginner

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1. Picking the method that's best for you, begins by asking yourself some basic questions.

- A. How much time do you want to spend composting?
- B. How much money do you want to spend on supplies?
- C. What do you want to do with the compost? (Making sure your expectations meet your needs)
- D. Why are you composting?
- C. Do you have lots of kitchen waste every day or do you only have large amounts of yard waste at different times of the year?
- E. Do you have any concerns about composting?
- F. How quickly do you want to have a finished product?

### 2. Types of Composting

There are several ways to look at composting; hot vs cold, continuous vs built once. The combinations are endless and it is up to you to decide what best suits your lifestyle.

- A. Hot (Outside composting bin only - usually built once)
  - a. Pros
    - a) Quick method
    - b) Kills pathogens
    - c) Destroys seeds (weeds, goat-heads..)
    - d) Minimum supplies to make and maintain
    - c) Great for taking care of large amounts of yard waste
  - b. Cons
    - a) Must be at least 3'x3'X3'
    - b) Requires turning over
    - c) Need 20:1 carbon:nitrogen ratio to work best
- B. Cold (Outside composting bin or composting with worm/vermiocomposting)
  - a. Pros
    - a) Slow or Quick depending on the type method
    - b) No size requirements
    - c) No turning
    - d) Don't need to worry about carbon:nitrogen ratio
    - e) May or may not take care of seeds depending on method
  - b. Cons
    - a) Does NOT kill pathogens
    - b) Requires an start-up investment of time and money

### 3. Successes and Failures

Once you pick the method you think will work best for you please keep in mind that everyone has their share of success and failures when composting. The key is not to give up but to keep on trying.

#### A. Problems/Solution

a. Sometimes the ratio isn't right (If the ratio is not right rebuild)

b. The sun can dry out a compost pile fast so you may need to build it in the shade and keep it covered with old carpets/sheets/shower curtains or any thing to keep it covered and from drying out. (It's the heat from the microorganisms not the sun that makes a hot pile work)

c. Too many unwanted pests such as mice or pets (Mice don't stay around piles that are turned every week and pets may need a barrier like easy to remove chicken wire.

d. Smells bad - (Turn it over and try rebuilding - rebuilding is a good solution to most hot composting problems)

e. Worm bin is too moist (Add shredded paper and stop feeding for a little while)

c. Little flies in the worm bin (Put outside with lid off from about 15 minutes but no longer as the worms can't handle the heat.

### 4. Resources

A. Master Composting website

B. Composting books

C. Troubleshooting questions - email

Master Composters