



# Home Composting Basics


Bernalillo County Extension Master Composters

2018 Final Project – Karie Luidens

# What is composting?

- ◇ All materials that were once living and are now dead will eventually break down
- ◇ In nature this can take many years
- ◇ Composting creates ideal conditions for things to break down efficiently
- ◇ The end result is healthy humus





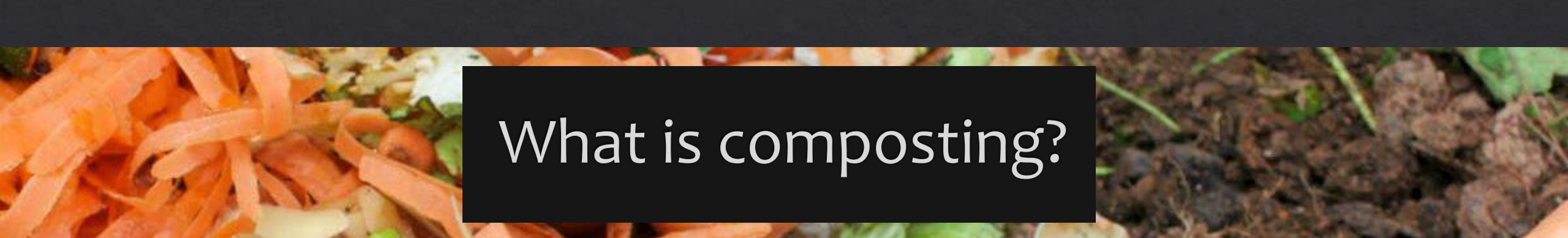
# What is composting?

“... once living and now dead...”

yard waste

paper products

kitchen scraps



# What is composting?

“In nature this can take many years”

moisture dries up  
temperatures change

decades may pass!






# What is composting?

“Composting creates ideal conditions”

transformation

in a year or less



What is composting?

“The end result is healthy humus”

...a perfect addition to  
enrich all types of soil!

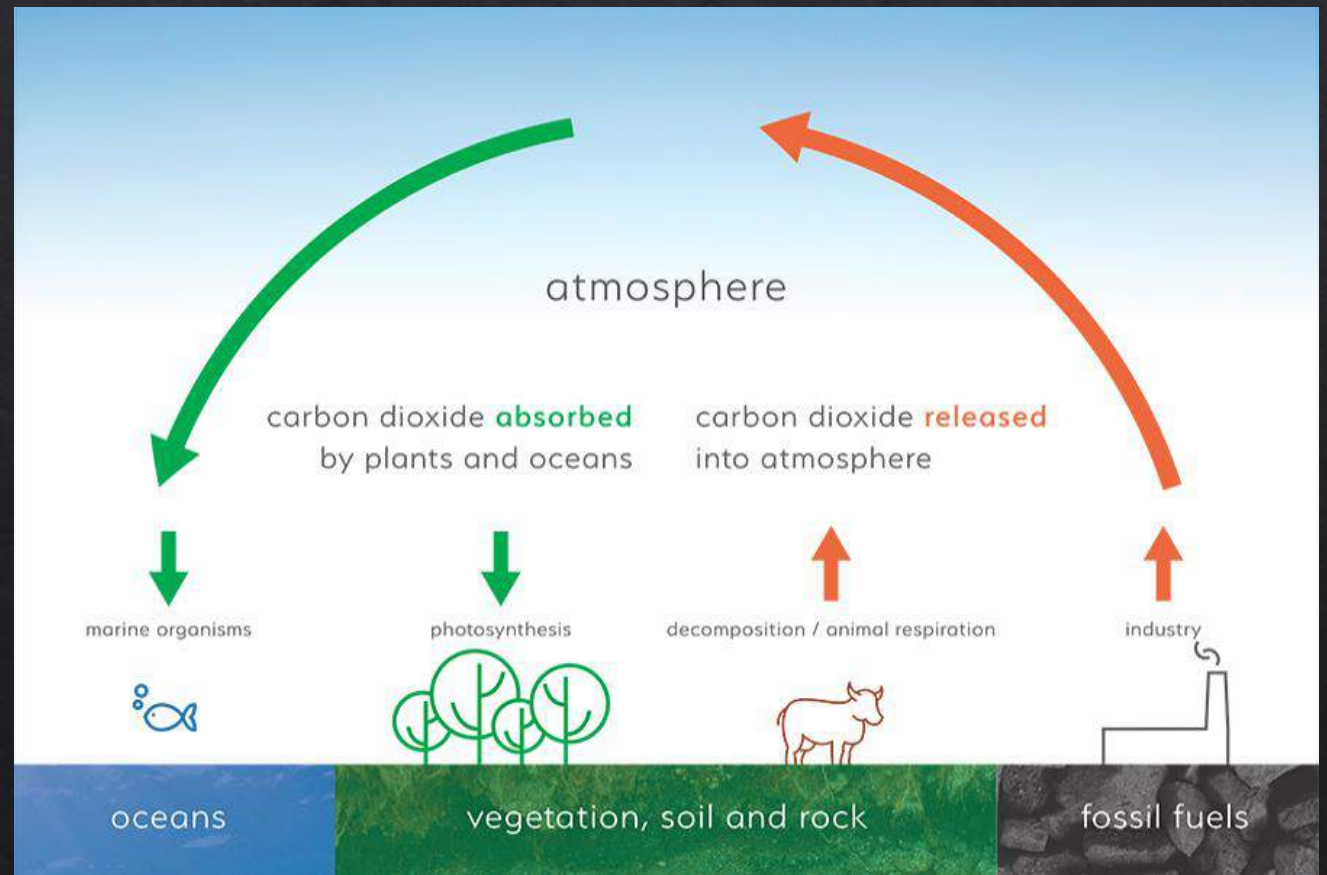
# Why bother composting at home?

- ◆ To help the environment
- ◆ To help your own garden



# Why bother composting at home?

- ◆ To help the environment...
  - ◆ Composting is recycling for carbon-based materials
  - ◆ It preserves the carbon cycle, which keeps carbon cycling through the environment the way nature intended







# Why bother composting at home?

◆ To help the environment...

◆ Composting keeps carbon-based materials out of landfills, where their fertility goes to waste and they decompose anaerobically, releasing carbon into the atmosphere as greenhouse gases



# Why bother composting at home?

- ◆ To help your own garden...
- ◆ The end-product of composting is full of nutrients that help plants thrive



# Why bother composting at home?

- ◆ To help your own garden...
- ◆ Creating your own soil amendment means you don't need to spend money on artificial fertilizers that actually damage soil over time





# How can I start composting?

- ◆ Learn what materials are and aren't compostable
- ◆ Learn different strategies
- ◆ Pick the strategy that fits your lifestyle
- ◆ Learn the right ratios to mix in
- ◆ Get set up and get going!





# Materials

## Compostable

- ◆ Plain paper products
- ◆ Plant waste: grass clippings, leaves, peels, stems, cores, pits



## Not Compostable

- ◆ Glossy or metallic paper
- ◆ Plastic, metal, glass, dirt, stone





# Materials

## Compostable

- ◆ Natural fibers

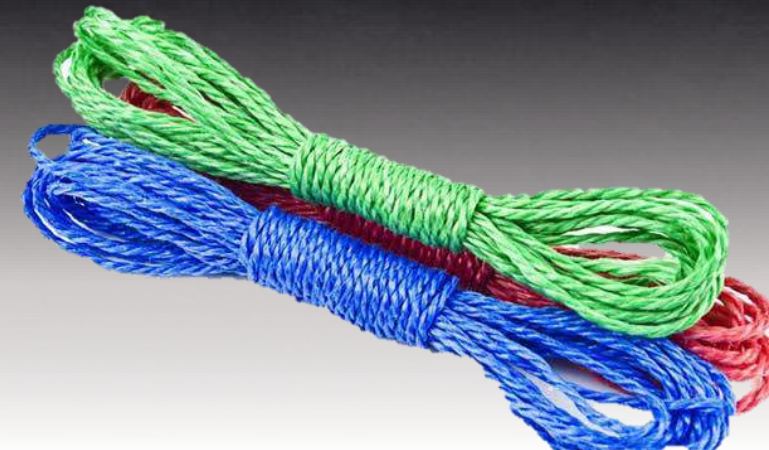
- ◆ Cotton, wool, lint



## Not Compostable

- ◆ Synthetic fibers

- ◆ Nylon, polyester, acrylic





# Materials

## Compostable

### ◆ Animal waste: Eggshells

*(The moist inner membrane breaks down, while the hard shell adds bulk and mineral micronutrients)*



## Not Compostable

### ◆ Animal waste: Most materials, e.g. dairy, meat, bones, fur, feces

*(These materials do break down, but they tend to smell, attract pests, and/or transmit disease)*



# Strategies

## Hot Composting

- ◆ Follows a specific formula to generate lots of internal heat
- ◆ Minimum 3' x 3' x 3' space
- ◆ Requires regular maintenance
- ◆ Breaks down materials rapidly

## Cold Composting

- ◆ All other methods are “cold”
- ◆ Different strategies can be adapted to different amounts of space, levels of physical ability, and degrees of maintenance
- ◆ Often takes longer





# Ratios

All setups need the same basic ingredients:

- ◆ Compostable materials:  
mix about 50% “green” / “brown”
- ◆ Water: keep everything damp  
(the biggest issue here in the desert)
- ◆ Oxygen: ensure air flow with  
“bulking material” (sticks, pine cones, etc.)





## Ratios

“Life finds a way...”

Don't worry TOO much about ratios.

There's no wrong way to compost.

As long as everything stays damp,  
it WILL eventually break down,  
it just might take longer.



Good luck!

- ◆ Attend our specialized workshops to learn more about specific composting strategies, like vermiculture or bucket composting
- ◆ Look online and at the library for more resources
- ◆ Any questions?
- ◆ Thanks for coming and good luck!