

Convective air flow.

5 Sept. 2017

John Zarola

Art work by - Jenn Myers

The high desert composter who manages evaporative loss from a composting setup will be successful. Moisture should be maintained at 50-60% throughout the decomposition process. It may be useful for you to read our *Composting in the Desert* brochure:

NMSU: Bernalillo County Master Composters Desert Composting Recommendations

Successful composting in the desert requires appropriate management of evaporative moisture loss from a setup. Low porosity bins, that is, bins with only a few air intake holes are quite useful. Air flow in a low porosity bin is accomplished with coarse bulking material, which decreases compaction of wet organic materials and allows for convective air flow throughout the pile.

See homemade desert compost bins here:

NMSU: Bernalillo County Master Composters: Homemade Compost Bins For the Desert

The following may be used as bulking material: finger size sticks, twigs, pine cones, chopped corn and sunflower stalks and corn cobs.

Note in the picture below that the blue arrows indicate the upward movement of air (chimney effect) in a bulked pile. Initially, 6-12 inches of coarse material is added to the bottom of the bin. Then layers of moist greens and browns are added. After every 5" of greens and browns, then sprinkle 2"- 4" of bulking on top of that layer. Do not compact or push down on any layer as this will obliterate the air spaces.

Continue this method as you build the pile. So, bulk as you build. When you are finished working, then drape the top of pile with a non-porous cover, e.g..a piece of plastic. This decreases upward evaporative losses. Contact us, if you have questions:

compost-questions@nmcomposters.org

