



# a beginner's guide to COMPOSTING

There's no better way to fortify your garden while reducing your contribution to landfills, but starting a compost pile can feel a little daunting. Just remember to follow this simple equation:

**CARBON + NITROGEN + OXYGEN + WATER + TIME**

Nitrogen-rich items make up the "greens" part of your pile.

**GREENS INCLUDE:**

- fruit peels, seeds and cores
- vegetable peels and seeds
- green leaves
- grass clippings

Items that produce carbon are called "browns," and should make up the bulk of your pile (aim for three parts brown to one part green).

**BROWNS INCLUDE:**

- twigs and branches
- dry leaves
- sawdust
- hay or straw
- mulch or wood chips
- old topsoil
- animal manure (from vegetarian animals ONLY—no cat or dog feces)

**TURN, TURN, TURN**

Use a pitchfork or shovel to turn the pile once a week or so, to aerate and help distribute moisture content. Gaps between the boards also help oxygen circulate.

**START WITH A THICK BASE LAYER** of brown material, including sticks, twigs, wood chips, hay or straw to promote air circulation. Then alternate layers of greens and browns, making sure to always have a layer of browns on top, to balance the moisture. Add water as needed to keep the pile damp but not wet—the moisture content should be like a wrung-out dishrag. Too dry? Add some water or greens. Too wet? Add more browns.

**HARVEST!** The compost is ready to use after 2–3 months. Once the pile is ready, you can also add worms to speed the process up.

**KEEP THESE OUT OF YOUR PILE**

Items that should not be added to your compost pile include:

- ashes (affects pH balance of the soil)
- meat (causes odor, attracts pests)
- fish and fish bones
- whole eggs (egg shells are okay)
- animal fats or other oily products
- dairy products
- cat litter
- dog or cat feces



**TIGHT ON SPACE?** A smaller compost pile can be successful with the addition of red wiggler worms. Fill a box 8–16" deep with layers of soil, newspaper and leaves. Place the worms on top with a layer of fruit and vegetable waste. Be sure to make holes in the bottom of the box to allow for ventilation and drainage.