



Backyard Composting- Composter Information

1. Where should I put my composter?
2. How do I start composting?
3. What organic material can go into a composter?
4. What does the composter need to be managed properly?
5. When can I harvest my finished compost?
6. When do I use the finished compost?
7. Where do I use the finished compost?
8. Why is my composter not doing anything?
9. Why does my composter smell?
10. How do I avoid attracting animals
11. How do I avoid attracting bears in cottage country?
12. Why does my kitchen catcher and/or composter attract fruit flies and bugs?
13. How do I get rid of fruit flies?
14. How do I manage my composter during all seasons?
15. Where can I get finished compost soil?
16. Diagram on how to use a composter.

1. Where should I put my composter?

For optimal composting ensure;

- The composter is exposed to the sun as much as possible
- The composter is in a convenient and accessible spot for all seasons
- The composter is in a well-drained area
- The composter is close to a water source for maintenance purposes

2. How do I start composting?

- Mix the soil in the location where the composter is being placed.
- After installation of the composter place a layer of small branches in the bottom for air and drainage purposes.
- Place kitchen scraps and dried yard waste in layers.
- Make sure to put in a layer of finished compost or garden soil to introduce microorganism.
- Mix the pile and add organics as often as possible.

3. What organic material can go into a composter?

The composter should have;

50% kitchen waste for nitrogen content (Green)

50% dried yard waste for carbon content (Brown)

Kitchen Waste (Green) - 50%

- Raw fruits and vegetables
- Coffee grounds and filters
- Tea bags
- Egg shells
- **Fresh** yard clippings, plants and leaves

Yard Waste (Brown) - 50%

- Dry yard clippings
- Dry leaves
- Dry plants
- Dry sticks (broken up)
- Hair and fur

What not to compost

- Wood treated with chemicals
- Dairy products
- Meat and bones
- Pet waste
- Fats and oils
- Charcoal/coal ashes
- Crabgrass and fast growing weeds
- Plastics, metals, glass
- Rhubarb leaves and other toxic plants



4. What does the composter need to be managed properly?

Organic Materials

- 50% kitchen (Green) and 50% yard (Brown)

Moisture

- Should be as moist as a wrung-out sponge
- When squeezing the compost there should be a few drops of water
- If the composter is too dry add water
- If composter gets too wet, add more dry materials or leave the lid off for a few sunny days

Oxygen

- Mix/turn the pile as often as possible
- Poke holes with a rake or broom handle periodically

Heat

- Composters work best when fully exposed to the sun

Microorganisms

- Add a layer of garden soil to make sure organisms are still present
- Cover fresh food waste with a thin layer of soil or leaves to reduce flies

Time

- The more you manage the compost, the faster organics will break down

5. When can I harvest my finished compost?

If the composter is mixed often and well taken care of there should be finished compost within one year to two years of starting the composting process.

6. When do I use the finished compost?

It will take a year or more after you started the composter to get finished compost. Compost should look like dark brown crumbly soil when finished. Compost is removed from the bottom of the pile (the top material will likely still be breaking down).

7. Where do I use the finished compost?

Compost can be spread out on lawns or put into gardens to enhance growth.

8. Why is my composter not doing anything?

Make sure there is enough kitchen waste and yard waste in the composter. Mix the compost pile as often as possible to ensure air circulation. Make sure there are microorganisms by adding some compost or soil to the pile. Ensure the composter is getting enough heat and add water if it becomes too dry.

9. Why does my composter smell?

If your composter smells, there is not enough oxygen/air circulation. This likely means there is too much wet green material, and not enough brown material. Turning the pile and adding a layer of yard waste or soil to the top of the pile will reduce smell.

10. How do I avoid attracting animals

Ensure the lid of the composter is closed tightly. Turn the pile and add some leaf and yard waste on top of the pile if it becomes too smelly. Add deterrents like strong spices (example; paprika, cumin, etc...) or moth balls around the outside of the Composter. Once the animal tastes or smells the deterrent, they will likely avoid it in the future.

11. How do I avoid attracting bears in cottage country?

Bears are not attracted to finished compost, but will be attracted to rotting food. Continue to avoid putting in meat, fish, dairy, and grease into your bin. During high bear activity times do not add fruit (especially berries and melon rinds which are particularly attractive to bears). Watch your bin for visits from furry friends that may indicate your bin is smelly. If smaller animals are visiting your bin, a bear might too.

Minimize other bear attractants like garbage cans, dirty BBQ grills, bird feeders, pet food, and citronella candles. Add dry leaf/yard, soil or pet waste on top of smelly food being added.

No compost bin is bear proof, but a well maintained compost bin should not produce smells that attract bears.

12. Why does my kitchen catcher and/or composter attracting fruit flies and bugs?

Organic materials will always attract bugs once they begin breaking down. This can be avoided by emptying your kitchen catcher often or storing your organics in the fridge/freezer before emptying. Do not let organics start to decompose in your kitchen. Add leaf/yard waste to the composter to cover and reduce moisture/bugs. Cleaning your kitchen catcher with vinegar and ensuring the lid of your kitchen catcher is tightly closed will help.

13. How do I get rid of fruit flies?

You can make your own fruit fly trap by using a container, saran wrap, soap and fruit or liquor. Fill the container with aged fruit, beer or wine. Add a small amount of soap. Tightly saran wrap the top of your container. Poke small holes in the top of the saran wrap using a pin or needle. The fruit flies fly in through the holes, become trapped and are killed by the soap added. Clean out the container every couple of days and keep it out until you no longer see fruit flies around the house.

14. How do I manage my composter during all seasons?

Summer- Keep your composter in top condition by layering and stirring. Breakdown of materials will be faster because of the heat.

Fall- If compost is available, harvest the finished compost. Use as a mulch in your flower beds or vegetable garden. Continue to layer and stir.

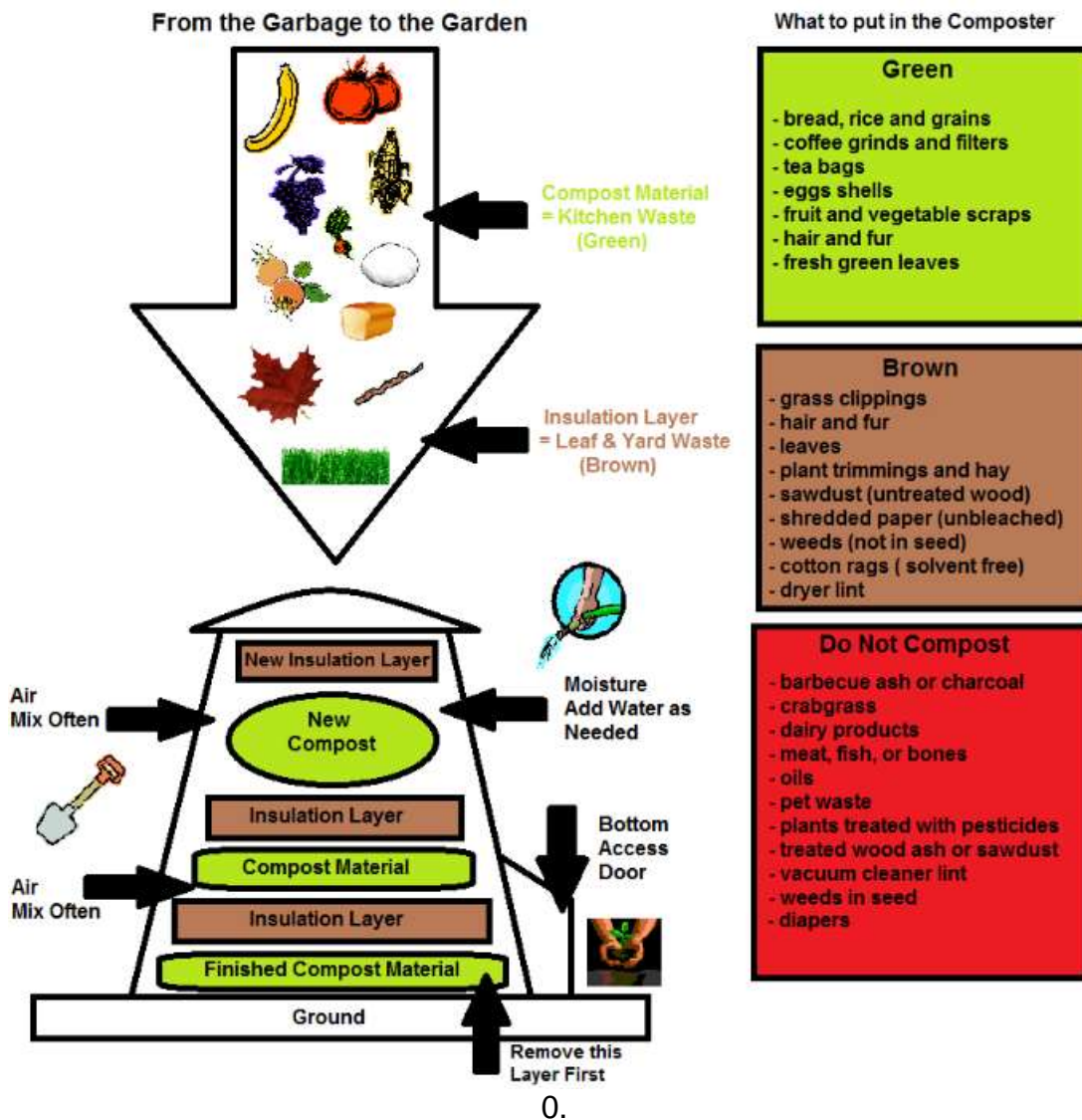
Winter- Keep your composter going through the winter by adding kitchen scraps regularly. Stirring and maintenance can wait until spring.

Spring- This is time for a fresh start. Empty the composter, use the finished compost in your garden and start a new pile with the material that is still breaking down.

15. Where can I get finished compost soil?

Compost is available for purchase directly from the City of Peterborough Harper Road facility 705-742-7777 x0 or Peterborough Green Up- Ecology Park (705) 745-3238

16. Diagram on how to use a composter.



For more information contact the County of Peterborough Waste Management
 Phone: 705-775-2737
 E-mail: waste@ptbocounty.ca