



# Backyard Compost Materials

Nitrogen "Greens"

Carbon "Browns"

Avoid

One bucket greens to one bucket browns (by volume). 30 parts carbon to one part nitrogen 30:1 (by weight)

Material	More info	C:N
Coffee grounds	Mulch directly on many plants. Grounds are neutral in pH.	20:1
Eggshells	No need to dry, crush or grind.	10:1
Feathers	Slow to break down, high in nitrogen.	6:1
Fruits, vegetables & grains	Loaded with plant nutrients. Can activate a slow compost. Bury in compost to discourage pests. Okay if moldy.	15:1
Garden debris	Plants, leaves, stalks, fallen fruit. Clip, chop or mow into 1/2 pieces or less.	25:1
Grass Clippings (wet)	Mostly water. Best to leave on lawn. Does not cause thatch. Mix well and spread thin.	20:1
Hair	Slow to break down. Both human and pet hair. Avoid using if colored with chemicals.	6:1
Hay	Might have weed seeds.	25:1
Manure (barnyard)	Cow, horse, sheep, goat, llama, chicken, rabbits. Ask about chemicals used to treat animals.	6-25:1
Tea leaves	High in nitrogen. Can be applied directly to some plants. Compost nonplastic tea bags also. Staples ok.	20:1
Weeds	No seeds, persistent roots, or weeds treated with herbicides/pesticides.	20:1
Urine	Is sterile, accelerates decomposition of carbon, sprinkle on pile.	0.8:1
Cardboard	Plain brown. Tear into small pieces	400:1
Coffee Filters (paper)	Tear large filters into small pieces.	200:1
Evergreen needles, cones	Break down slowly. Can also leave them as a mulch for the tree.	80:1
Fabrics	Small scraps of wool, cotton, felt, and silk. No synthetic fibers or blends.	200:1
Grass Clippings (dry)	Mix well to avoid clumps.	80:1
Leaves	Break down faster if shredded. Better as a mulch or leaf mold.	60:1
Paper	Shred. No glossy/colored paper. Better to recycle if possible.	200:1
Sawdust	No treated or plywood sawdust.	500:1
Straw	Helps aerate the pile.	90:1
Woody material	Including chips, branches, twigs. Chip or shred if possible. Small to medium size. 1/2 inch or less pieces.	700:1
Wood Ashes	Can be a valuable source of lime and potassium.	

## Avoid in Backyard Composting

Black walnut leaves	Has a chemical (Juglone) which can stunt or kill garden plants.
Diseased plants	Compost heat may not destroy disease.
Herbicides (hay / grass)	Chemicals of greatest concern are picloram, clopyralid, and aminopyralid. No grass clippings from golf courses.
Invasive weeds / trees	Including: buttercup, blackberry, ivy, morning glory, quackgrass, Tree of Heaven etc. Dispose via garbage or yard debris.
Meat, bones, dairy, fish, grease	Odors attract pests if not properly composted.
Noxious/poisonous weeds	Dispose via garbage or yard debris.
Pet waste	Including: cats, dogs, birds, pot-bellied pig or human waste. Risk of pathogens and parasites.
Sod	Knock off excess soil. Compost separately and moisten each layer when initially stacking to help speed up decomposition.