

Backyard Composting Workshop



Learning objectives

- Decomposers
- SMART method
- How to Compost



What is Composting?





In nature it's called humus

- In your bin it's called compost
 - Rich, dark crumbly
 - Earthy smell
 - Nutrient rich soil amendment



Why compost?

- Good for us
- Good for the garden
- Good for our planet



The Decomposers



FOOD WEB OF THE COMPOST PILE



Use the SMART method for success

- Size
- Moisture
- Aeration
- Ratio
- Transform







Moist like a wrung out sponge

- Not too dry
- Not too wet



Aeration supports aerobic (air breathing) organisms

- Move bin next to the old spot
 Re-load & fluff
- Stir in place
 - Turn outside in



Ratio - 1 part Brown : 1 part Green



Greens



Browns



Layer greens & browns



Transform garbage to garden gold



Carbon compound	Generally found in	Specific examples	Comments
Carbohydrates	Sugars and starches	Fruits, vegetables, grains	Easiest to decompose
Cellulose Wood	Plants	Leaves, stems, straw, paper	
Chitin	Animal and insect	Crab shells, insect exoskeletons	
Lignin	Complex compound in wood	Trees	Hardest to decompose

Actinomycetes



It's a chemical reaction



Think Pair Share

If you were to fill a compost bin with 100 gallons of material what would you put in it?

Note: Refer to the Compost Materials guide

Choosing your compost system









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Some tools to speed you along







How to rebalance a stinky bin

- Situation:
 - Ammonia like odor
 - Rotten eggs or worse
- Problem:
 - Too wet / no air
- Solution:
 - Turn the pile and add more brown mater the pile.





Critters you might encounter



Using the compost you made



Spreading compost

- 2" layer over garden beds; exposed soil areas
- 1" of compost around drip-line of plants/trees.
- ¹/₄" of sifted compost to turf in spring and fall.



Composting myths

- Will my compost pile catch fire?
- Should I adding commercial activators?
- Can I plant straight into compost?
- Will weed seeds be killed?



Building an "add as you go" bin (Cool)

- 1. Dump kitchen scraps "greens"
- 2. Cover with "browns"
- 3. Add leaves, garden trimmings whenever
- 4. Dig out compost at bottom of pile
- 5. Return rest to bin/pile







- Day 7
- 50% volume drop
- 150 degree temp.



- Day 28
- 66% volume drop
- Ambient temp



- Grasscycling leaving clippings on the lawn
- Clippings are 75% water
- Quickly decompose
- Rich in nutrients N-P-K around 4-1-2
- Reduces need for fertilizers and pesticides
- Non-thatch causing
- Cut grass when dry to 3 inches high

Leaf Mold



Trench Composting

- Good for all kitchen waste
- Dig a trench 12 inches deep
- Throw in items
- Chop and mix with soil
- Cover with remaining soil (at least 8")
- Plant into trench in 3 months



DIY wire mesh bin [|]



- 4' x 12' x 1/2" hard ware cloth (19 gauge)
- Insulated wire for twist ties (14 gauge)
- Wire cutters
- Tarp and strap/bungees to secure
- 1. Fold 3' (reinforces top/bottom)
- 2. Fold over cut ends
- 3. Stand into a circle to desired diameter
- 4. Use twist ties to secure

Supplies for class

- Sample browns & greens
- Sample composts (finished, sifted, worm, leaf)
- Compost thermometer
- Wing dinger
- Garden / Spading fork
- Pitch fork
- Sifter
- Compost bin