



CLARK COUNTY Composter Recyclers



CLARKCOUNTYCOMPOSTS.ORG

What is Composting?

Anything that was once alive will rot and break down until it becomes part of the soil. Fungi, bacteria, worms and other decomposers turn waste, like kitchen scraps, into compost. Composting gives the decomposers the air, water, food and shelter they need to do their job. Active/hot composting is when you manage the greens and browns along with turning to speed up the process. Passive/cold/ lazy composting is as easy as dumping food scraps and covering with dry material.

Why Compost at Home?

Every year, Clark County residents send 88 million pounds of fruits and vegetables to the dead-end landfill. By collecting these peels, rinds, cores and scraps, you can cycle nutrients like calcium, copper, iron, magnesium phosphorous, and potassium back into rich compost, giving plants what they need to grow and be healthy— whether they're potted houseplants or an outdoor vegetable garden. Compost also helps protect plants from diseases, pests and the effects of drought.

How to Get Started

You don't need special equipment to successfully compost at home. All you need is a little knowledge, and the Composter Recyclers are here to help! This guide will help get you started. Attend a composting workshop to get hands-on experience.

Learn more about upcoming Composter Recycler workshops and access additional resources about composting at ClarkCountyComposts.org.

WHAT CAN I COMPOST?

Greens: Wet materials like fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, and grass clippings



Browns: Dry materials like chopped straw, shredded paper, dry leaves and sawdust



Avoid: Plants sprayed with chemicals, weeds or diseased plants, pet waste, meat, fish, bones, dairy products, and products labeled as 'compostable,' such as cups, plates, napkins, bags and utensils (these won't break down and may contain harmful chemicals)



For other formats, contact the Clark County ADA Office:
Phone: (564) 397-2322, Relay 711 or (800) 833-6388
Email: ADA@clark.wa.gov

The Composter Recycler program is coordinated by Clark County Public Health. Clark County solid waste planning and programs are a cooperative effort of Clark County, Battle Ground, Camas, La Center, Ridgefield, Washougal, Vancouver, and Yacolt.



WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY COMPOST?

- > My bin smells sour, like ammonia, or like rotten eggs or worse

CAUSE: Too wet, not enough air, and/or too much green material.

SOLUTION: Turn or mix pile and add browns.

- > My bin is attracting rodents

CAUSE: Compost bin is not secured, allowing rodents in.

SOLUTION: Purchase a bin that has a top and bottom or an enclosed tumbler system.

- > The compost at the bottom of my bin is ready, but not the stuff at the top

CAUSE: Layering or “compost-as-you-go” composting.

SOLUTION: Remove the finished compost from the bottom, return the stuff from the top, and continue adding new materials in a layered wet/dry approach.



ISN'T MY COMPOST PILE SUPPOSED TO BE HOT?

Compost piles will heat up if they are large, built with the proper ratio of greens to browns, and mixed regularly, but your scraps will turn into compost whether or not your pile heats up. These “hot” compost piles turn scraps into compost more quickly. To create a hot compost pile, fill a bin by alternating 3-inch thick layers of greens and browns, adding water as needed. Mix your pile after 5–15 days, then again after another 5–15 days. Let cure for at least 30 days.



Backyard Composting Basics

The basics of backyard composting can be remembered using the acronym **SMART**:

Size: Materials should be chopped into pieces roughly two to four inches in size before being added to a compost pile

Moisture: The pile should be kept as damp as a wet sponge that's been tightly squeezed.

Aeration: Turning or mixing your compost pile adds air, which helps materials break down faster.

Ratio: When adding materials to your pile, add equal amounts of “greens” and “browns.”

Transform: Your compost is ready when it is dark brown, crumbly, and smells like rich earth.

Pile Styles

All composting uses the same basic “recipe.” Visit a compost demonstration site to see these different methods in action and decide which is best for you. For instructions on how to build your own bin, visit ClarkCountyComposts.org.



WIRE MESH BIN

Made from wire mesh (also known as hardware cloth) found at hardware stores, these bins are inexpensive and easy to use. A 4' x 12' x 1/2" section (19 gauge) allows you fold down six inches on the top and bottom to reinforce your bin to 3' high x 3' wide. Use insulated wire for twist ties (14 gauge), a heavy-duty tarp and bungee cords to cover the bin.



WOOD BIN

Often constructed using wood pallets, wood bins are usually larger than other bin types and better for composting larger amounts of material.



PLASTIC BIN

These bins are sturdy, long-lasting and good at keeping unwanted critters out of the compost. Finding a single molded piece bin is recommended.



TUMBLER

Tumbling bins make turning compost easier and keeps it out of reach of curious pets.

Using
Your
Compost

Home compost is best used as a mulch spread on your gardens prior to planting, around the drip line of your trees, and around shrubs and bushes. Compost provides nutrients, helps retain water, protects against pests and plant diseases, and reduces weed growth.