



THE DIRT ON COMPOST

A Composting Guide





COMPOSTING BASICS

University of Mississippi Compost Program

What is Compost?

Compost is organic material, like food waste, that has been broken down at high yet stable temperatures into a nutrient rich soil amendment.

Why should you compost?

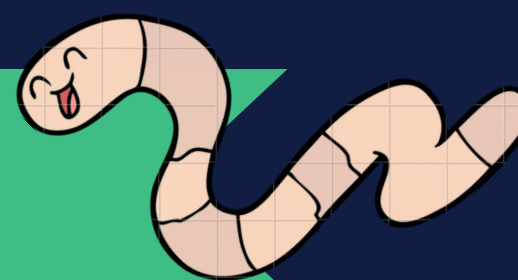


Reduces or eliminates the need for using fertilizers.



For every pound of food waste you compost, you save 3.8 pounds of green house gas emissions from being released into the atmosphere.



How does composting work?



Efficient and controlled decomposition are key components of the composting process. A mixture of nitrogen rich materials (called “greens”) and carbon rich materials (called “browns”) helps create the proper ratio of oxygen, water, nitrogen, and carbon needed for the compost pile to break down efficiently.

Greens & Browns

Green materials are organic materials like vegetable scraps and coffee grounds that are rich in nitrogen and heat up the pile to facilitate in decomposition. Brown materials are carbon-rich materials like leaves and wood chips that act as a food source for the organisms that break down the compost.



STARTING YOUR PILE

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What can you compost?

- Produce
- Coffee grounds
- Pet hair
- Paper
- Tofu
- Veggie scraps
- Stale bread
- Weeds
- Pasta
- Popcorn kernels
- Tea bags
- Fruit rinds
- Nut shells
- Eggshells
- Beans



What can you not compost?

You should not put meat, bones, dairy, chemicals, plastic, or pet feces in your compost pile. Animal products like meat, bones, and dairy make your compost pile stink and attract rodents and flies.

How do you start a compost pile?

Step 1: Decide where you want to put your compost.

- Do you want to compost in a compost bin or a pile?
- There are a variety of DIY and store-bought compost bin options
- If composting in a pile, reserve an area of at least 3 square feet.

Step 2: Collect green and brown materials.

- Many people either collect their food waste in a sealed bucket in their kitchen or take their food waste directly out to the compost pile or bin.

Step 3: Add the green and brown materials to the compost pile or bin.

- Start your pile by adding the green materials and then completely cover the green materials with the brown materials.






COMPOST PILE MAINTENANCE

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How do you maintain a compost pile?

Water the pile.

- For the composting process to work properly, moisture needs to be present.
 - Add just enough water for the compost to feel like a moist sponge. Too little or too much water slows down decomposition.
 - If you accidentally over water your pile, turn the pile frequently to rid the pile of excess moisture.
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Turn the pile.

- Turn the compost pile once every week or two to aerate the pile.
- Turning the compost often prevents the pile from smelling bad and provides oxygen to the microbes that are decomposing the pile contents.
- The more you turn your pile, the faster the pile decomposes.


When is the compost finished decomposing?

The compost is finished and ready to use when the green and brown materials have turned into dark and crumbly soil.

What can I do with the finished compost?

Till the compost into your garden soil.

Feed your plants by side-dressing them with compost.

- To side dress your plants, make a ring of compost around each plant and then water it.
 - The nutrients from the compost will seep into the soil and "feed" your plant.
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UM COMPOST PROGRAM



University of Mississippi Compost Program



How was the compost program started?

The pilot composting program at Ole Miss began in the fall of 2013 after receiving funding from the Green Fund.

Where does the program collect waste from?


The compost program collects pre-consumer food waste from campus dining facilities including the Marketplace at the Residential Colleges, Rebel Market, Freshii, the Grill at 1810, Ole Miss Catering, Lenoir Dining, and Einsteins.

How does the UM Compost Program work?

The Office of Sustainability employs Green Student Interns who collect pre-consumer food waste from locations on campus. The interns compost that food waste at the Maynard W. Qumby Medicinal Plant Garden. The finished compost is used in several gardens on and off campus.

Can I purchase compost?

The UM compost program has both sifted and unsifted compost for sale. If you wish to buy compost from the UM compost program, please email green@olemiss.edu.





For more information about composting and sustainability
at the University of Mississippi visit:

SUSTAIN.OLEMISS.EDU

