

Factsheet



Home Composting



Compost is natural and inexpensive and really good for the environment! By turning food scraps and garden waste into compost you can improve soil quality, conserve water, recycle valuable nutrients and reduce the use of artificial fertilisers. You also will prevent greenhouse gas emissions and landfill impacts from wasted food and garden vegetation.

For many Perth households, about half of what we throw into our rubbish bin is food and garden waste. These materials are perfect to be used to make compost which will benefit your garden.

Compost can be used as a seed-raising mix, as a natural fertiliser or as mulch (it is perfect to apply up to twice a year on natives).

How to compost:

1. **Choose where you want to have your compost site.** It is best to look for a site with good drainage and summer shade.
2. **Choose your composting method.** Your choice will be influenced by what you want to use the compost for, how much time you have to spend on compost creation, how quickly you want the compost and how much space you have for your compost heap.
 - For kitchen scraps only a worm farm is a good option. It produces liquid fertiliser and worm castings which are great for your garden. However, it does need extra care in summer to avoid baking worms.
 - A bokashi bin is also good for just kitchen scraps. It ferments food waste in a sealed container and is very low maintenance. However, it does require ongoing purchases of bokashi microbial mix.
 - A black cone unit is a slow producer of 'cold' compost after approximately one year and does not require the use of turning devices.
 - A compost tumbler is a fast producer of compost in approximately 6 weeks, especially if turned daily. However, it does not have the added benefit of allowing worms to enter, as do open-to-ground heaps.
 - A single hot compost heap can be built by yourself in an open space, but needs regular turning.
 - A three bin heap is great for ongoing and large volumes of compost.
3. **Gather your compost ingredients.** For a good compost, you will need a balance of good nitrogen rich kitchen scraps such as fruit and

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vegetable peelings and green garden vegetation such as fresh grass clippings as well as carbon rich brown garden waste such as dry leaves, paper and straw. You will also need some water and some soil or completed compost to introduce composting micro-organisms.

- 4. Start layering.** To build a good compost heap, start with a thick layer of twigs or coarse mulch at the base for drainage. Then follow with a thick layer of kitchen scraps and green garden vegetation, a layer of brown garden vegetation and some water to moisten it well. Keep repeating these layers.
- 5. Maintain your compost.** So your compost does not smell, turn it with a garden fork weekly or place garden stakes or pipes through the heap to allow air in. You should always cover your heap so it is just moist, not wet. If you do find it gets too wet, just mix some more dry brown material through it and turn it again.

What can you compost?

Fruit and vegetable peelings, newspapers, grass clippings, weeds, tea leaves, coffee grounds, egg shells, old potting mix, dead flowers, human and animal hair.

Try and avoid placing meat or dairy products in your compost until you are confident and experienced in making compost.