

Composting is a natural process that can be a useful means of disposing of waste and creating fertilizer at the same time. Organic materials (leaves, grass, vegetable leftovers, etc) are broken down into nutrient rich humus or compost.

Composting can be an effective means of reducing the amount of yard waste that is disposed of each year. A good mix consists of brown and green materials. Brown materials are things like leaves and dead plants, which are high in carbon. Green materials can consist of freshly pulled weeds and garden prunings, fresh grass clippings, and *non-meat / non-dairy* kitchen scraps. These items are high in nitrogen.

Composting can be done in an open pile, but it is preferable that a composting bin, either homemade or store bought be used. They can be purchased at garden centers and hardware stores.

Here are some important keys to good composting:

- 1) Keep the compost pile as moist as a wrung out sponge
- 2) To speed up decomposition, turn the pile frequently using a pitchfork. This provides the microorganisms with enough oxygen so that they can heat up the compost

Benefits of Composting

- Reduces the volume of garbage to landfills
- helps soil fertility
- promotes healthy roots
- saves time bagging grass and leaves

Points to remember: Please be sure to follow these pointers so that your compost pile does not become foul-smelling.

Never compost meat and/or dairy products

Be sure to turn the pile often

Keep in mind that if the compost pile becomes a public health nuisance (becomes foul smelling, attracts rodents, etc.) a complaint could be filed and a summons could be issued.

If you would like more information, please contact the Rutgers Cooperative Extension at 973.228.2210. You may also view their composting fact sheet at: <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/stormwater/highway/pdf/rutgershomecompost.pdf>