

Composting



Composting is an inexpensive, convenient way to handle your organic waste and to help the environment at the same time. Yard trimmings and food residuals constitute around 30% of the U.S. solid waste stream. Most of this could be diverted from landfills by composting, saving considerable money and energy. In addition, composting aids the environment by decontaminating soil, suppressing plant disease, and causing less need for pesticides and water.

Composting helps you, the homeowner, by improving soil and creating protective mulch for trees and shrubs. It saves you money on soil and fertilizer, reduces the need for watering, and creates less waste that needs to be bagged and dragged to the curb for collection.

While composting may seem mysterious or complicated, it really is a very simple process. It occurs continuously in nature and has been called "nature's recycling." Some predict that it will become as commonplace as recycling in the next ten years. (In California it is already mandated in some areas.)

How to compost:

- All you need is a bin, organic waste, air, moisture, and a turning tool (or a bin with its own turning feature). Put organic materials in your bin along with water, making sure that you use the correct items to create a mixture of "brown" and "green" layers (see websites below). Periodically the pile will need to be watered and turned for aeration. Beneficial bacteria will thrive, breaking down the raw organic materials into a dark, rich, soil-like product with a fresh, earthy odor. The process can take from two to twelve months, depending upon how much you water and turn, and other factors you can read about in the DEP/DPW websites.
- Complete directions about the composting process, as well as details about how to buy a compost bin, are available on the MA Department of Environmental Protection website: www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/reduce/composti.htm, and on the Newton DPW website: www.newtonma.gov/DPW/recycling/Composting/compost_bin.htm
- Some common things that you can compost are: grass, garden clippings/weeds, vegetable and fruit scraps, bread, grains, eggshells, teabags, coffee grounds, dead house plants, leaves, twigs, woodchips, pine needles, corn stalks, shredded newspapers, paper towels, tissues and napkins.