



# How to COMPOST



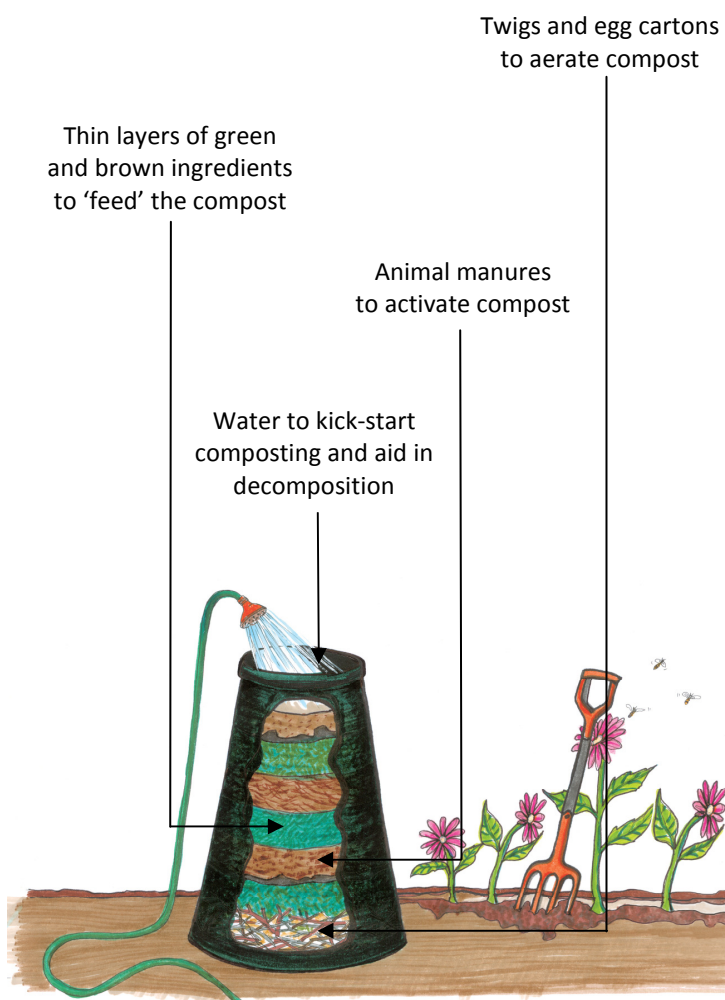
*There are many ways to make successful compost. You can use bins, tumblers or covered heaps. These instructions focus on bin systems. Earth Carers favorite tip is to monitor your compost system - get intimate with it!*

Compost bins can be purchased from gardening stores. Some Councils offer composting bins at a discounted rate.

**Don't panic! the finished product will not look homogenous like commercial compost. Each item will compost at a different rate, some chunks in your compost is fine - your garden won't mind!**

## Getting Started

1. Choose a site that is shady in summer and has good drainage. Bury the bin 10cm into the soil.  
Tip: Cover base with a layer of mouse mesh.
2. Add a layer of small twigs, egg cartons dry leaves and/or torn up newspaper. This acts to aerate the compost.
3. Add activators such as animal manures, compost from an old heap, blood and bone and/or rich soil.
4. Add water.
5. Add a variety of materials in thin brown and green layers adding water and activators occasionally. Continue to add these items over time until your bin is full.
6. To aerate your compost and to speed up the process, turn your compost with a compost mate or pitch fork every couple of weeks or more if necessary.
7. Monitor the compost to make sure it is still active, not too dry or wet or attracting pests - see over for troubleshooting.



# Compost ingredients

Anything that once lived can be composted; however, to get started the following items are a good guide, in general adding **more brown than green** items:



Green/wet/ nitrogen rich	Brown/dry/ carbon rich
Fruit and veggie scraps Tea leaves / coffee grounds Dead cut flowers Fresh grass clippings Kitchen scraps Manures Hair	Dry garden prunings Dry grass clippings Paper products Dry leaves Sawdust Straw
Activators	Don't Add
Comfrey and yarrow Animal manure Blood and bone Old compost	Meat and bones Poultry and fish Dairy products Pet poo

## Troubleshooting

Problem	Cause	Solution
Smelly compost	Too much water or green ingredients, poor drainage or anaerobic (no air)	For a quick fix add garden lime and turn heap. In general, add more brown material to absorb moisture. As a last resort, rebuild the whole heap and add more brown ingredients as you go.
Pests  <i>You will have lots of activity in your bin so don't panic about small vinegar flies, slaters, beetles, worms etc.</i>	Ants = too dry	Add water and green ingredients.
	Flies = inappropriate ingredients	Make sure the lid is secure and avoid meat and dairy items. Cover food scraps with a layer of soil.
	Cockroaches = too acidic, anaerobic	Turn heap and add lime
	Rats / mice = inappropriate ingredients	Secure mouse mesh to the base. Make sure the lid is secure and avoid meat and dairy items. Cover food scraps with a layer of soil.
Just not working - "I will decompose quicker than my compost heap.	The balance is not right	Make sure you have the right mix of green and brown ingredients and the right amount of water. Turn your heap. To speed up the process, add more green ingredients and activators.

Also see our 'How to Worm Farm' factsheet. Visit [www.earthcarers.org.au](http://www.earthcarers.org.au)

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