

D.I.Y Composting

This factsheet provides information about D.I.Y Composting ideas on how to compost at your home.

Why compost?

Home composting reduces the amount of organic waste going to landfill, helping to reduce the amount of harmful gases that contribute to the greenhouse effect. Composting simply converts organic waste into a by-product that is very useful around the home as a natural garden fertiliser and soil conditioner.

Composting replicates a natural recycling process that maintains soil nutrients and plant communities. In nature, composting allows nutrients in an ecosystem to be used over and over again helping to sustain the ecosystem. This is called the nutrient cycle.

How do I compost?

Composting is easy if you simply remember-

A.D.A.M

Air: turn over your compost with a garden fork or similar every couple of weeks so there is plenty of air circulating.

Diversity: make sure there is a range of different nitrogen based and carbon-based materials in the compost.

Aliveness: when there are bugs and worms living in your compost it is working well. Bugs will appear on their own accord and should not be placed into the compost.

Moisture: compost works best if it is damp but not wet.

In addition to practising A.D.A.M., place your compost in a warm but partly shaded location to achieve the fastest decomposition time.

Finished compost will appear dark brown and smell like freshly turned earth.

Composting Materials

Successful composting relies on the right balance of organic materials. Composting materials are classified into two broad categories: Nitrogen rich and Carbon rich.

Nitrogen rich organic materials include;

- leaves (green pruning's);
- grass (green clipping);
- cow, horse or chicken manure;
- fruit and vege scraps;
- coffee grounds and tea bags;
- hair from your brush or comb.

Carbon rich organic materials include:

- dried leaves and dried grass clippings;
- sawdust and wood shavings;
- hay and straw;
- vacuum cleaner dust;
- shredded paper.

The wrong food

There are some organic waste items that may encourage vermin such as rats, flies, and cockroaches, and will smell when they decompose. Some items to avoid putting in your compost heap/bin include

- fats and oils;
- meat products;
- dairy products;
- cat or dog faeces.

Compost Trouble Shooting

You need to have a good balance of moisture, heat, air, and composting materials to achieve a successful compost environment. If a problem does occur, keep A.D.A.M in mind and try one of the troubleshooting suggestions in the table below:

Problem	Solution
Material not breaking down	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add water if very dry;• Ensure there are equal proportions of Nitrogen rich and Carbon rich materials in the compost (See 'Composting Materials' on reverse).
Smelly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add wood ash, lime, or dolomite to help neutralise the compost's PH;• turn more regularly to keep breakdown processes aerobic;• if very wet, mix in some carbon rich materials (See 'Composting Materials' on reverse).
Flies and vermin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cover exposed fruit with a layer of soil or mulch;• remove any meat, dairy, greasy or processed foods;• always keep the lid on.

Building your own compost bin

It is not necessary to purchase a compost bin to create compost. All you need to do is remember A.D.A.M, and you will have just as much success with a home-made compost bin as you would with a store-bought compost bin. Building a compost bin from items around the house or farm is quite easy. See if any of the following examples work for you.

Wire Bin

Use a length of medium-gauge chicken, gabion or dutch wire mesh approximately 3.25m long and 1.25m wide. Tie the ends together to form a cylinder. Plastic garden or fencing mesh may be used in a similar manner if you have any on hand.

A wire bin this size holds just over one cubic metre of material. Place cylinder in a partly shaded location and fill with compostable materials. If heat or water retention is required, over wire bin with a later of damp carpet or hessian cloth.

Multi-Bay Wood Bin

A multi-bay composting set up allows you to use the various sections for storing materials, active composting, and curing or storing finished compost. Each bay should be approximately 1m³. Allow air spaces between the sidewall slats and fashion some form of carpet or wooden lid for insulation and water retention.

Composting Rubbish Bin

To convert an old plastic rubbish bin into a compost bin, cut off the bottom with a saw. Drill approximately 25, 5mm-10mm holes in the sides of the bin for aeration. In a sunny location, bury the bottom of the bin 150mm-300mm below the soil surface and press the loosened soil around the sides to secure it. Partially burying the compost bin will make it easier for little critters like worms and microorganisms to enter the bin. Keep a lid or cover on the bin for insulation and water retention.

Further Information?

You can contact Council for further information in any of the following ways:

- ✉ South Burnett Regional Council
PO Box 336
KINGAROY QLD 4610
- ☎ (07) 4189 9100
- @ info@sbrc.qld.gov.au
- 👤 Visiting a Customer Service Centre