Composting is an easy way to transform your landscape trimmings and fruit and vegetable scraps into a dark, crumbly, sweet-smelling soil amendment. Organic materials represent about 36% of our waste stream and recycling them is a natural way to reduce the amount of materials going to landfills and conserve natural resources.

**Why Compost?**

- **Saves you money** by potentially lowering garbage bills and replacing the need for commercial soil amendments
- **Helps your garden and container plants** by improving the fertility and health of your soil
- **Saves water** by helping the soil hold moisture and reducing water runoff
- **Benefits the environment** by recycling valuable organic resources and reducing the use of fuel to transport yard trimmings off-site and process them on a large scale

### Do Compost

- Grass clippings
- Leaves
- Shrub prunings (chopped)
- Flowers
- Weeds
- Sawdust
- Hair
- Fruit/vegetable scraps
- Coffee grounds/tea bags
- Uncoated paper (small amounts)

### Don't Compost

- Meat
- Bones
- Dairy products
- Fish
- Greasy foods
- Dog/cat feces
- Unchopped woody debris
- Diseased plants
- Coated paper

---

**Composting Resources**

- Your county cooperative extension office: extension.uga.edu/county-offices.html
- Georgia Recycling Coalition: georgiarecycles.org
- U.S. Composting Council: compostingcouncil.org

---

**Symptoms** | **Problems** | **Solutions**
---|---|---
Pile not composting | Too dry | Add water until damp as a wrung-out sponge
| Too much dry, woody material (lack of nitrogen) | Turn, add fresh green materials or organic nitrogen fertilizer (manure)
Pile smells rotten and/or attracts flies | Pile is too wet or compacted | Turn, add dry materials
| Contains non-compostable materials | Remove meat, grease, etc. and turn
Pile has sharp, ammonia-like odor | Too much green material or food | Turn to get more oxygen in pile, add dry or woody materials
Rodents in pile | Food in open bin, holes larger than 1/4" | Turn, rodent-proof by making holes smaller than 1/4"
| Contains non-compostable materials | Remove meat, grease, etc. and turn
Low pile temperature | Pile is too small (less than 3’ x 3’ x 3’) | Collect more materials and mix the new with the old, cover top, insulate sides

---

**Adapted from "Composting at Home In Georgia," a brochure originally produced by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Compost illustrations: Vecteezy.com**
Compost Structures

From No Tech to High Tech

No matter your situation, there is a composting solution for you! Pick a structure that's the right size, style, cost, and effort level for you. Also keep in mind, you can use recycled materials and containers when constructing your compost bin.

HEAPS are the least organized way to compost, but also require the least effort. Simply pile your yard waste and let it sit. If you choose to turn it once in a while it will decompose faster. Otherwise just leave it and in one to two years it will turn to compost.

HOOPS (usually made from chicken or hog wire) are easy, fairly inexpensive to build, and help keep your compost pile tidy. Secure the hoop with hooks or twists of wire. To speed composting, undo the hoop, set it up next to the pile, and turn the pile back into the cage in its new location.

BINS neatly contain yard trimmings, and when made rodent-proof, work well for composting food wastes. Build with recycled wood, wire, or other materials for an inexpensive and attractive structure. Many styles are also commercially available.

BUCKETS are the apartment-dweller's answer to composting food scraps indoors or out. Used 5-gallon buckets with sealable lids can be found for free at many grocery stores and restaurants. Stir the compost-soil mixture to aerate it once or twice a week. Be sure to fill your bucket only half-full for easy stirring.

WORM BINS or BOXES can be used to compost kitchen scraps indoors or out. Convenient for small spaces, they give off little odor. Worms typically eat their own weight in kitchen scraps per day, but are picky eaters. They don't eat yard trimmings – only fruit and vegetable scraps. Worm bins/boxes can be made at home or purchased at the store. The most important thing to remember is to allow for plenty of holes to provide the worms adequate air to breathe.

Basic Compost Recipe

The bugs, fungi, bacteria, and worms in your yard or worm bin do most of the composting for you. The basic recipe for composting is to:

1. CHOP compostables. The more you chop, the faster the decomposition process takes place.
2. MIX 2/3 dry, brown material (leaves, straw, shredded wood) with 1/3 moist, green materials for a balance of nutrients, air, and water.
3. ADD water as you build your pile and maintain its moisture level so your pile is as damp as a wrung-out sponge. Proper moisture is essential for organisms to break down organic materials into compost.

Composting Methods

No Fuss Compost

The easiest way to compost yard trimmings.

Ingredients: Yard trimmings, water as needed

Directions:
1. In a heap, hoop, or bin, layer your chopped yard trimmings as they accumulate.
2. Water so compost is kept as moist as a wrung-out sponge.

In 12-18 months, the material at the bottom and center of the pile will be a dark, crumbly compost. Sift and use the uncomposted material to start a new pile. Covering your bin or pile helps control its moisture content by either retaining moisture during hot months or repelling water during rainy months.

Worm Compost

Worm composting, also known as vermicomposting, is a fun way to turn kitchen scraps into a rich fertilizer and soil amendment. This form of composting is popular with schools and people with no yards.

Ingredients: Fruit and vegetable trimmings, newspapers, and red worms. To start, use a 2:1 worms to food weight ratio (e.g., 2 lbs. worms to 1 lb. kitchen scraps)

Directions:
1. Shred and moisten old newspapers (black and white pages only) and layer them 6 inches deep in a well-ventilated plastic or wooden box. The compost will be ready to use in 1-3 months when it has degraded into a rich, dark humus. Sift and use uncomposted material to start a new pile.

Fast Compost

The fastest composting method requires turning the pile frequently to get plenty of oxygen to the organisms breaking down the materials and creating heat. Temperatures in the pile can reach 120-150° F during “fast” composting, ensuring that weed seeds and pathogens are killed. An extended-length thermometer will give the most accurate temperature readings.

Ingredients: Yard trimmings, fruit and vegetable scraps, and water as needed

Directions:
1. Alternate and mix fresh green with dry brown materials in layers until the pile is at least one cubic yard (3’ x 3’ x 3’).
2. Water so compost is kept as moist as a wrung-out sponge.
3. Cover the pile with a sheet of plastic, a piece of carpet, or a 1-inch layer of soil.
4. Turn the pile 1-3 times a week to give it the air it needs for fast composting.

The compost will be ready to use in 1-3 months when it has degraded into a rich, dark humus. Sift and use uncomposted material to start a new pile.

Bucket Compost

The most compact way to compost kitchen scraps.

Ingredients: Kitchen scraps, dry material (soil, sawdust, straw)

Directions:
1. Add chopped kitchen scraps to a 5-gallon bucket. Mix in an equal amount of dry material at least once a week. If too wet, add more dry material.
2. Stir thoroughly each time you add materials.
3. When bucket is 3/4 full, let stand 1-3 months, mixing it every 1-2 weeks.

Use finished compost in garden or planters as it is produced.