COMPOSTING: TURNING WASTE INTO SOIL HEALTH

Composting is a simple, powerful way to recycle organic materials into nutrient-rich soil amendments that support healthy crops and sustainable agricultural systems.

WHAT IS COMPOST?

Compost is the managed breakdown of organic materials, like food scraps and yard waste, into a nutrient-rich soil amendment. In organic systems, compost is a foundational tool for building healthy soils and supporting productive, resilient farms and gardens.

BENEFITS OF COMPOSTING

BUILDS SOIL HEALTH AND RESILIENCE

- ✓ Organic practices like composting add organic matter and essential nutrients, improving soil structure, fertility, and water retention.
- ✓ Healthy compost provides long-term fertility, supporting beneficial microbes that drive nutrient cycling and plant growth.

REDUCES WASTE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- ✓ Composting diverts food scraps and yard waste from landfills and returns nutrients to the soil.
- ✓ It reduces reliance on synthetic fertilizers, helping increase soil carbon storage and reduce pollution.

CO_2

COMMON COMPOSTING SYSTEMS

Wire bin

Three-bin system

Vermicomposting

CORE COMPOSTING PRINCIPLES

A healthy compost system requires the right balance of:

"GREENS" (NITROGEN) + **"BROWNS" (CARBON)** + **WATER & OXYGEN**

Food scraps, grass clippings, immature weeds

Dry leaves, cardboard, paper, sticks

To encourage microbial activity (the heavy lifters of this system)

A GENERAL GUIDELINE

1 part greens : 3 parts browns

THE ORGANIC CENTER

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Turn compost every 2–3 days during active periods in Spring, Summer, and Fall to provide oxygen and speed decomposition

Maintain moisture: compost should be damp, not dry or soggy

Finished compost is dark, crumbly, and earthy smelling after ~6 months

Proper composting (especially of manure) is critical for FOOD SAFETY, requiring temperatures of at least 145°F for 3 days to kill pathogens.

145°F

TIPS FOR COMPOSTING AT HOME

SOURCES FOR COMPOST

GREENS	BROWNS
Vegetable Trimmings	Aged Hay
Algae	Oat Hay
Green Leaves	Cardboard
Grass Clippings	Dry, Shredded Leaves
Kelp or Seaweed	Sawdust
Green Shrub Prunings	Chipped Wood
Tea Bags	Newspaper
Alfalfa Meal/Hay	Cardboard Egg Cartons
Coffee Grounds/Filter	Wrapping Paper
Animal Manure (herbivores only)	Paper Towels
Houseplants	Straw
Weeds (without seed heads)	Toilet Paper Rolls
Old Flower Bouquets	Wood Ash (no coal)
Human/ Animal Hair	Dried Grass
Aquarium Water (freshwater only)	Shredded Paper
	100% Cotton Fabrics (small pieces)

GETTING STARTED

Choose a convenient, well-drained location

Start with a base layer of browns, then alternate greens + browns

Keep materials chopped or small to speed decomposition

WHAT TO COMPOST

- Fruit & veggie scraps
- Coffee grounds & tea bags
- Grass clippings & dry leaves
- Newspaper, cardboard, small sticks

WHAT *NOT* TO COMPOST

- Meat, dairy, oils
- Diseased plants
- Pet or human waste
- Heavily moldy food

BEST PRACTICES

- ✓ Turn regularly to introduce oxygen and support microbes
- ✓ Maintain moisture (like a wrung-out sponge)
- ✓ Cover with browns to reduce odors and pests

USING YOUR COMPOST

- ✓ Mix compost into garden soil rather than applying alone
- ✓ Use as a top-dressing for beds or around plants
- ✓ Apply regularly to build long-term soil health

KEY TAKEAWAY

Composting is one of the most accessible and impactful organic practices, transforming everyday waste into a resource that builds soil health!