

Keeping Our Soil Productive and Water Clean

Our mission is to encourage and assist the people of Crawford County in making decisions for the wise use of our natural resources.

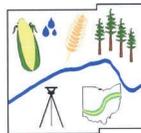
We accomplish this mission by assisting individuals with putting conservation practices on the land as well as providing educational brochures, news articles, and workshops .



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Troubleshooting

The compost pile should have an earthy smell. Try the following solutions if you have one of the following situations.

Rotten Oder: too much moisture - turn pile, add dry porous materials (leaves, sawdust, straw).

Ammonia Oder: too much nitrogen (greens) - add carbon (browns) leaves, straw, sawdust.

Low Pile Temperature:

- Pile too small - make larger,
- Insufficient moisture- add water,
- Poor aeration - turn pile,
- Lack nitrogen - mix in grass clippings, manure.

Much of the information in this pamphlet is from the website www.composting101.com/. The website has a complete home composting guide. This site offers practical information for converting yard, garden and kitchen waste into soil building compost.

Home Composting

Nature's Way of Recycling



Crawford Soil & Water
Conservation District

Get Started Today!

Why Compost?

More than 1/4 of our household waste is yard clippings and kitchen scraps. Composting is a way of recycling yard waste and other organic materials through decomposition.

Composting Conditions:

The composting process is a biological one that compares to the raising of plants. The rate of composting, like the rate of plant growth, can be affected by many factors.

A good compost pile requires a balance between:

Nutrients: Carbon (browns) and Nitrogen (greens), 25 –30 parts carbon to 1 part nitrogen

Air: good supply of oxygen for organisms to breathe

Moisture: pile should be similar to a damp sponge

Temperature: pile can range from 59 degrees to 158 degrees F.

Compost is generally ready to use when it looks like humus (after about two to three months). However, aging the compost for another 1 to 2 months is recommended.



Items to Compost:

Browns = High Carbon

Ashes, wood
Bark
Cardboard, shredded
Corn stalks
Fruit waste
Leaves
Newspaper, shredded
Peanut shells
Peat moss
Pine needles
Sawdust
Stems and twigs, shredded
Straw
Vegetable stalks

Greens = High Nitrogen

Alfalfa
Algae
Clover
Coffee grounds
Food waste
Garden waste
Grass clippings
Hay
Hedge clippings
Hops, used
Manures
Seaweed
Vegetable scraps
Weeds*

Items to Avoid:

- Meat, Bones, Fish, Fats, Dairy - These products can "overheat" your compost pile (not to mention make it stinky and attract animals). They are best avoided.
- Synthetic Chemicals - Certain lawn and garden chemicals (herbicides - pesticides) can withstand the composting process and remain intact in the finished compost.
- Diseased Plants - It takes an efficient composting system and ideal conditions (extreme heat) to destroy many plant diseases. If the disease organisms are not destroyed they can be spread later when the compost is applied. Avoid questionable plant materials.
- Pet Droppings - Dog or cat droppings contain several disease organisms and can make compost toxic to handle.
- Coal Ash - Most ashes are safe to mix into your compost pile, but coal ashes are not. They contain sulfur and iron in amounts high enough to damage plants.
- Colored Paper - Some paper with colored inks (including newsprint) contain heavy metals or other toxic materials and should not be added to the compost pile.

*Avoid weeds that have gone to seed, as seeds may survive all but the hottest compost piles.

Composting Methods

Compost decomposes fastest between 120 and 160 degrees Fahrenheit, so anything that will increase the heat will "cook" your compost faster. Here are four tips for fast composting:

- 1.) Chop and shred larger items, which makes it easier for the bacteria to break them down. For example, one easy way is to slice and dice garden waste is to run your lawn mower over leaves and other garden waste. Take scissors to newsprint or cardboard.
- 2.) Turn, turn, turn.
- 3.) Give your compost heap a "big meal" versus small snacks. Collect all your organic waste over a couple of days and then add it in one big bunch. The more you add at one time, the more your compost will heat up.
- 4.) Keep your compost pile in the sun. The heat will speed up the process.

A Word About Activators

A compost activator contributes either high nitrogen, microorganisms, or both, and provides a quick boost to the decomposition process. Consider throwing some algae, seaweed or lake weed into the pile. Just be sure to rinse off any salt water before adding. You can also "jump start" your compost by adding aged manure, alfalfa meal, cottonseed meal, blood meal or compost starter. Also you may want to add ashes from a wood-burning stove if you've added a lot of acidic materials such as pine needles and oak leaves. Wood ashes are alkaline and can help adjust the pH of your compost pile if it gets too acidic.