

COMPOSTING AT HOME

DID YOU KNOW?

Approximately half of what's in our general waste wheelie bins in Douglas Shire is organic waste.

Composting is nature's way of recycling. It's an easy and free process you can do at home to save food and garden waste, while improving your garden's health.

Compost Ingredients

Compost is the soil-like material that is created when plant and vegetable matter break down. It can be used as a potting mix, soil enhancer or as mulch.

Compost is created by balancing four main ingredients:






- nitrogen-rich materials or 'greens'
- carbon-rich materials or 'browns'
- oxygen
- water.

For every 1 part 'greens', you will need to add 2 parts 'browns' material to create the right balance. The following table includes what can be composted:

Type	Ingredients
Nitrogen products ('greens')	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coffee grounds and paper tea bags• Fruit and vegetable scraps• Garden clippings (fresh), including flowers• Grass clippings (fresh)• Manure (e.g. from chickens, cows, ducks)
Carbon products ('browns')	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dried leaves• Dry grass clippings• Shredded paper and cardboard• Wood chips or sawdust from untreated wood

Composting Methods

There are a few different composting methods you can use. The best one for you depends on the size of your garden, how much organic waste you produce and how much time and money you want to spend.

Compost Method	Most Suitable Space	Ingredients	Notes
<div>Compost Heap</div> <div></div>	Large backyards	Garden waste only	Pile lawn clippings and prunings in a heap, alternating carbon-rich and nitrogen-rich materials. Turn regularly and keep moist.
<div>Compost Bin</div> <div></div>	Backyard or courtyard space	Garden waste and food scraps	Alternate carbon-rich and nitrogen-rich materials, turn regularly and keep moist.
<div>Compost Tumbler</div> <div></div>	Backyard, courtyard or large balcony	Garden waste and food scraps	Alternate carbon-rich and nitrogen-rich materials, turn regularly and keep moist.
<div>Worm Farms</div> <div></div>	Suitable for small spaces (e.g. balcony or garage). Must be kept in the shade.	Small amounts of garden waste and fruit and vegetable scraps	Add fruit and vegetable scraps and cover with carbon-rich materials. Do not overfeed.
<div>Bokashi or fermentation systems</div> <div></div>	Suitable for residents in apartments or houses.	Food scraps (including meat, dairy, and starchy foods)	Add food scraps to bucket along with 'Bokashi mix'. Compact the ingredients down and replace the lid tightly to minimise air getting in. Once full, add ingredients to compost bin or directly to the soil.

How to Compost

Choose an area that is flat, has good drainage, is semi-shaded and is not right against your house or a neighbour's fence. It should be located not too far from your kitchen or garden beds so you can access it easily, and near a tap if possible.

For the initial set up, collect enough compost ingredients to half-fill the compost bin. Include a mix of carbon and nitrogen materials (see compost ingredients table above for guidance).

1. Place a 5 to 10 centimetre layer of coarse materials such as wood chips at the bottom of the compost bin for aeration and drainage.
2. Add a layer of soil or finished compost to add microorganisms to kick-start the decomposition process. Other activating materials include comfrey leaves, manure, coffee grounds and/or worm juice.
3. Add carbon (browns) and nitrogen (greens) material in alternating 5 to 10 centimetre layers.
4. Sprinkle layers with water to ensure all materials are damp.
5. Continue to add kitchen and garden scraps daily or on a regular basis. Ensure there is a mix of carbon (browns) and nitrogen (greens) material.
6. Turn regularly with a fork or compost screw, approximately every week or two. Ensure materials remain damp and add water if necessary.



Your compost is ready when the finished product resembles a rich, dark, soil-like material.

It can take a couple of months, you don't want to use it before it's ready as it will continue to break down and generate heat which could harm your plants.

Composting Tips

Smaller items decompose faster, so chop or shred them if possible.

Keep a pile of brown material near the compost, you can add them regularly after the nitrogen rich food-scraps to keep the compost balanced.

Common Compost Issues and Solutions

Problem	Cause	Solution
Compost smells	No enough carbon-rich material	Add carbon materials and mix through well.
	Not enough air	Turn the pile more regularly to improve drainage and aeration. Add coarse material (e.g. twigs) to create air pockets.
Slow to break down	Not enough nitrogen-rich ingredients	Add food scraps or fresh grass clippings and mix through well.
	Not enough air	Turn more regularly
	Compost too dry	Add more water until compost is damp all the way through
Maggots or cockroaches (beneficial to the process if you can tolerate them)	Ingredients such as meat or fats added to bin	Avoid adding meat, fats, bread, rice, pasta, and dairy products to compost. Cover each layer of food waste with carbon materials. Turn more regularly to prevent food waste rotting before it breaks down.
Mice and rats	Bread or grains in compost	Put fine wire mesh under the compost bin. Turn heap more regularly Cover each layer of food waste with carbon materials
	Compost is too dry	Add more water until the heap is damp all the way through

Visit Council’s website to find out more about sustainable waste management

