

# Healthy Lawn and Garden

Techniques to help improve the health of home lawns and gardens, save time and money, and reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions.



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## Backyard Composting

Composting is the result of aerobic bacteria, fungi and other micro-organisms breaking down organic materials. Households produce a significant amount of organic material that is well suited for composting such as vegetative food scraps from the kitchen, dead houseplants, leaves, twigs, grass clippings, garden trimmings and weeds.

## How To Compost

**Materials needed:** Sources of carbon, sources of nitrogen, air and water.

**Ingredients:** Green and brown yard waste, water as needed.

Your compost bin or pile will need more carbon (brown) materials than nitrogen (green) materials; about 25-30 parts carbon to one part nitrogen materials (C:N ratio; 25-30:1).

Carbon or brown materials are dry leaves, woody plant trimmings, paper, straw, pine needles and sawdust. Nitrogen or green materials are kitchen scraps (no meat, no fat, no bones), leafy plant trimmings, spent flowers, herbs and vegetables, livestock manure (no dog, cat or human manure), weeds (foliage only), pet bedding, hair and fur, feathers and hay.

Remember the **4 Rules of Composting:** Quality **Materials**, Adequate **Volume** of pile, Consistent **Moisture**, Good **Air** circulation.

### Directions:

- 1.) Mix one part green yard waste with two parts brown to form a pile; an average size is 4'x4'x4'. For fast composting, chop it up first with a hoe or lawn mower.
- 2.) Mix in one inch of soil.
- 3.) Keep the pile as moist as a wrung-out sponge.
- 4.) Turn the pile every week to let air in.

Finished compost will take between four weeks and one year, depending on how often you turn it and how well you maintain the moisture of the pile.

## Tips for Composting Grass Clippings

Grass clippings are mostly water and are very rich in nitrogen. They can be problematic because they tend to compact, increasing the chance of becoming anaerobic (absence of oxygen), matting together and emitting a strong ammonia-like odor. Here are some tips for composting this valuable "green":

- Compost grass clippings in thin layers, intermixed in a 2-to-1 ratio with brown materials such as dry leaves or plant debris.
- Save and bag Fall leaves for Spring/Summer grass composting.
- Use a thick layer of coarse brown material at the bottom of the pile or your bin for aeration.
- Let grass clippings dry out for a couple of days before composting.
- If you're attempting to compost a large quantity of grass clippings with a good source of brown material, turn the pile using a compost aeration tool, every few days to get air into the materials. This will help to prevent potential odors.

## DID YOU KNOW?

As much as 35% of household waste is made up of kitchen scraps and yard clippings; which are ideal for backyard composting.

## Do Compost

Leaves  
Grass clippings  
Dead plants  
Vegetative food scraps  
Fruit wastes  
Manure  
Straw/Hay  
Coffee grounds  
Weeds

## Don't Compost

Weeds that have gone to seed and/or invasive  
Wood ashes  
Lime  
BBQ charcoal  
Meat, grease, bones  
Dairy products  
Cat, dog or human fecal matter  
Contaminated matter  
Branches and wood chunks

Resource Recovery and Recycling Authority of Southwest Oakland County

contact us at 20000 W. Eight Mile Rd. Southfield, MI 48075 online at [www.RRRASOC.org](http://www.RRRASOC.org) or call 248.208.2270