

Backyard Composting

Information from the City of Fort Wayne, the Fort Wayne-AlLEN County Department of Health and the Allen County Solid Waste Management District



What is Composting?

Composting is the controlled decay of organic material such as grass clippings, leaves, wood shavings, cardboard, and paper.

Getting Started...

- Ensure that your neighborhood association permits composting
- Begin your pile on a layer of straw
- Choose a composting method: *Cool and Easy* or *Hot and Fast*

Composting Methods:

Cool and Easy: Add material to your compost pile gradually, allowing material to naturally degrade. Your compost will be ready in six months to two years.

Hot and Fast: Build and actively mix your pile to produce disease killing temperatures. Your compost will be ready in three to four months.

Why Compost?

- Composting can create a nutritious, organic lawn fertilizer to condition the soil and promote landscape growth.
- On average, Fort Wayne residents throw away 12,000 tons of landscaping debris per year.
- This 12,000 tons costs approximately \$300,000 in disposal processes.
- Leaves and yard debris are banned from the landfill, why not compost them instead?

Build Your Compost With:

One part "Green" - Grass clippings & yard waste, manure, garden scraps, coffee grounds, and fruit & veggie scraps

Three parts "Brown" - Dry leaves, branches, woody material such as shredded cardboard and paper.

NOT

- Large twigs and limbs
- Meat products/eggs or kitchen grease
- Pet waste



Resources

www.acwastewatcher.org
www.edp.gov/recycle/composting-home
eartheasy.com/grow_compost.html
purlivingforlife.com/composting-101
howtocompost.org
mastercomposter.com/compost

Keep it Clean and Tidy

Whatever composting method you choose, your compost **must not** attract rodents or create a nuisance. If it does, a local law enforcement agency can require you to clean up, modify, move, or eliminate your compost pile if it creates a health or sanitary issue.

Benefits of Using Compost

Soil Structure:

- Compost can make soil easier to work, plant, and cultivate
- Sandy soil will retain water and add nutrients that would wash through sand.
- Soil will become less likely to erode with compost.

Nutrients:

- Compost will balance soil pH to make it stronger and more nutrient rich.
- Compost contains iron and manganese, which store bought fertilizers lack.
- Nutrients are released slowly, creating use for lifeless soil.

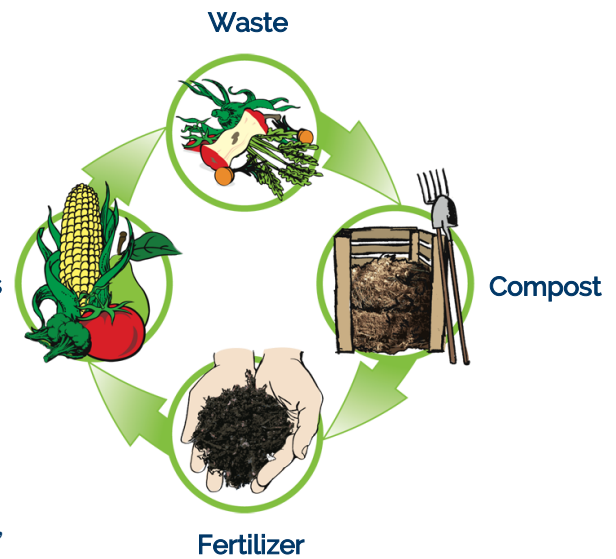
Improvement in Soil Life:

- Good bacteria will break down mulch and plant debris for their nutrients, which young plants can use.
- Organisms like insects and worms absorb the nutrients of compost to keep soil aerated.

When is Compost Ready to Use?

Using compost before it's ready will damage plants. Immature compost will introduce weed seeds and root damaging acid. Compost should:

- Smell earthy - not sour or putrid like ammonia
 - Compost should not heat up when it's wetted or turned
- Compost should be crumbly in texture and look like dark soil



Composting and Water Quality



- Composting promotes root growth so that rainwater can soak into the ground and decrease runoff pollution.
- Composting can break up silty soil and clay, allowing plant roots to grow and spread to allow water to drain and air to aerate.
- Compost particles attract nutrients that have a difficult time washing away in a rainstorm.
- With compost, the need for synthetic fertilizer and herbicides nearly vanishes.
- Soil when mixed with compost is able to retain moisture, eliminating the need for extra watering.

Learn More:

For more information on how to save money and help the environment visit:

Cityoffortwayne.org

or

call (260) 427-8311 or 311

No Backyard?

Drop off compostable material at a Fort Wayne/Allen County community composting facility.

City Utilities' Biosolids, Lime & Yard Waste Recycling Site:

6202 Lake Avenue