

## HOW TO USE COMPOST



Compost is ready to use when compost materials are reduced to a dark, rich humus. If some larger pieces are not decomposed, you can sift those out and use them to start a new batch. Compost

can be added to the soil at any time to help keep plants healthy. It improves soil structure, holds moisture, provides plant nutrients, and introduces beneficial organisms into the soil. Here are the most common ways to use compost.



### SOIL AMENDING

Compost can be used to enrich garden soils before planting. Mix 4-6 inches of compost into newly reclaimed or poor soils. Mix 1-3 inches into annual garden beds each year, or into soil under and around new trees and shrubs before planting.



### MULCHING

By spreading 2 to 3 inches of compost over the soil around plants, trees, shrubs and exposed slopes, gardeners and landscapers suppress weeds, keep plant roots cool and moist, conserve water, maintain a loose and porous surface, and prevent soil erosion.

### POTTING MIX

A potting mix can be made by mixing one part sand, two parts compost and one part soil. Be sure compost is fully decomposed (black and crumbly) before using it.



## COMPOST TROUBLESHOOTING

SYMPTOMS	PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS
Pile not composting	Too dry	Add water until damp as a wrung-out sponge
	Too much dry, woody material (lack of Nitrogen)	Turn, add fresh green materials or organic nitrogen fertilizer (manure)
Pile smells rotten and/or attracts flies	Pile is too wet, or compacted	Turn, add dry materials
	Non-compostables present	Remove meat, grease, etc. and turn
Pile smells like ammonia (sharp odor)	Too much green material (or food wastes)	Turn to get more oxygen in pile, add dry or woody materials
Rodents in pile	Food wastes in open bin, holes larger than 1/4 inch	Turn compost and rodent-proof your bin by making sure there are no holes larger than 1/4 inch
	Non-compostables present	Remove meat, grease, etc. and turn
Low pile temperature	Pile is too small (less than 3x3x3)	Collect more materials and mix the new with the old; cover top, insulate sides

## COMPOSTING RESOURCES

Contact your county's cooperative extension service for more tips on composting and additional resources.

Visit one of the statewide home composting demonstration sites where various composting methods are displayed and additional information is available. Contact the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) at the address below for site locations, training, and starting a local home composting program. A list of videos, books and manufacturers is also available.

Georgia Department of Community Affairs  
Home Composting Program  
60 Executive Park South  
Atlanta, GA 30329  
(404) 679-4940

[www.dca.state.ga.us](http://www.dca.state.ga.us)  
Visit the clean water campaign website at  
[www.CleanWaterCampaign.com](http://www.CleanWaterCampaign.com)

## WHY COMPOST?

Composting is an easy way to transform your landscape trimmings and your fruit and vegetable kitchen scraps into a dark, crumbly, sweet-smelling soil amendment. Gardeners refer to composting as "turning your garbage into gold" because it saves landfill space, conserves natural resources, and improves soil quality.

In Georgia, yard trimmings have been banned from landfills since 1996. Organic waste such as yard trimmings and kitchen scraps represents about 36% of our waste stream. Recycling organic waste is a natural way to reduce the amount of wastes going to landfills and it conserves natural resources. *Composting is Recycling*, it:

- **Saves you money** by lowering garbage bills and replacing the need for commercial soil amendments.
- **Helps your garden and container plants** by improving the fertility and health of your soil.
- **Saves water** by helping the soil hold moisture and reducing water runoff.
- **Benefits the environment** by recycling valuable organic resources and reducing the use of fuel to transport yard trimmings off-site and process them on a large scale.

## WHAT CAN YOU COMPOST?

### DO COMPOST

Grass Clippings  
Leaves  
Shrub Prunings (chopped)  
Flowers  
Weeds  
Sawdust  
Hair  
Fruit and vegetable scraps  
Coffee grounds/tea bags  
Small amounts of uncoated paper

### DO NOT COMPOST

Meat  
Bones  
Dairy Products  
Fish  
Greasy Foods  
Dog and cat feces  
Unchopped, woody wastes  
Diseased plants  
Coated paper

# COMPOSTING AT HOME IN GEORGIA



## Turning Garbage Into Gold

PREPARED BY  
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF  
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS  
HOME COMPOSTING PROGRAM  
AND PROVIDED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
THE CLEAN WATER CAMPAIGN.