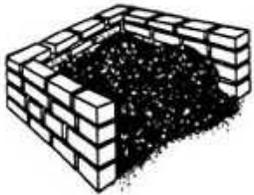


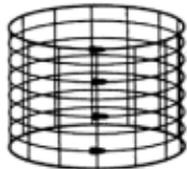
## What kind of compost bins are available?

You can build your own compost bin or purchase one. The following illustrations show four different types.

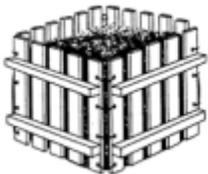
Block Bin



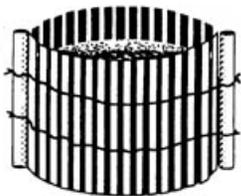
Woven Wire Bin



Wooden Pallet Bin



Snow Fence Bin



## Why compost?

- ❖ Composting is a cheap and easy way to process organic material for the garden.
- ❖ It can save you money, as well as time spent bagging grass clippings and leaves.
- ❖ Composting can extend the useful life of landfills.

## Information

For more information about composting, contact:



North Dakota Department of Health  
Division of Waste Management  
918 East Divide Avenue – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Bismarck, North Dakota 58501-1947  
701.328.5166

Or visit the Department of Health's website:  
[www.ndhealth.gov/WM/composting/CompostingInformation.htm](http://www.ndhealth.gov/WM/composting/CompostingInformation.htm)

### References:

- *Composting at Home*; Ohio State University Extension bulletin HYG-1189-99
- *Home Composting: A Guide to Composting Yard and Food Waste*; Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

# Composting in Your Backyard



North Dakota Department of Health  
Division of Waste Management  
Rev. 2008

## What is composting?

Composting is the breakdown of organic materials by very small living organisms. Potentially, anything that grows in your backyard is food for these organisms.

Like other living things, the organisms need water, air and a balanced diet – a mixture of green forage, high in nitrogen, and brown material, high in carbon.



### High-Nitrogen “Green” Ingredients



Grass clippings  
Weeds

Food wastes (fruits and vegetables, coffee grounds, tea bags, egg shells, etc.)  
Alfalfa hay/meal



### High-Carbon “Brown” Ingredients



Autumn Leaves  
Straw  
Paper items (towels, napkins, bags, plates, coffee filters, tissue and newspaper)  
Corn stalks  
Wood chips and sawdust  
Pine needles

## What steps do I take?

Although the following steps will get you started, your own experience will help you tailor a method that best fits your needs.

- 1) Build your own compost bin, or purchase one from a garden catalog, nursery or hardware store.
- 2) Set up the bin in a convenient, shady area with good drainage. A pile about 3 feet square and 4 feet high will help maintain the heat generated by the composting organisms.
- 3) Start the pile with a layer of coarse material to build in air passages. Add alternating layers of “brown” and “green” materials, with a shovel full of soil on top of each layer.
- 4) If the materials are too dry, add water as you build the pile.
- 5) Turn the pile each time you add material to provide oxygen for the organisms that actively break down the compost pile. Frequent turning of the pile so that the top becomes the bottom will shorten compost time.

## What do I do if...?



The compost has a bad odor.

*It is not getting enough air. Turn the compost; add dry material if the pile is too wet.*



The center of the pile is dry.

*There is not enough water in the compost. Add moisture and turn the pile.*



The compost is damp and warm only in the middle.

*The pile is too small. Add more material, then mix and turn the pile.*



The heap is damp and sweet-smelling, but still will not heat up.

*The pile lacks nitrogen. Mix in a nitrogen source such as fresh grass clippings, coffee grounds or food scraps.*