

## Maintaining a Compost Heap

Now that you have the right lawn and plants in your garden as well as a water tank installed for drought proofing your garden. We now need a **Compost Heap** to use to fertilize your plants as well as using it to top dress your lawn.

By top dressing your lawn with the compost, about 1 inch of compost all over your lawn can cut down on the amount of watering and cutting of your lawn. This again can help the environment and cut down on your carbon foot print.

**Below are a list of things that you can compost and cannot compost.**

### **Items that can go into compost:**

- Hat and straw
- Wood chips
- Sawdust
- Rags made from wool
- Backyard trimmings
- Tea bags
- Torn newspaper
- Nut shells
- Lawn clippings
- Leaves
- Dead house plants
- Fruit and vegetable waste
- Cardboard rolls
- Manure
- Coffee grounds
- Ash from your fireplace



### **Items that cannot go int compost:**

- Cream, milk, butter, eggs and yogurt. These will attract bad odor problems and will attract rodents and flies.
- Any garden trimmings that have been sprayed with chemicals. Can kill any beneficial compost organisms.
- Do not use pet wastes, because it may contain parasites, germs, and viruses harmful to your family.
- Meat scraps or fish scraps due to creating bad odor that will attract rodents and flies.
- Oils, fats and greese, due to creating bad odor that will attract rodents and flies.
- Any type of charcol bricket ash because it may contain substances harmful to plants.
- Offcuts and leaves from black walnut trees because it can release substances harmful to your plants.

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Many people who maintain gardens have a large amount of organic waste, from grass clippings to leaves and dead plants. Unfortunately, many waste money and time having these wastes transported to a landfill. It isn't just a waste of good compost; it's a waste of everything that goes into the process of transporting it (the garbage man's time, the money you pay for the removal, etc). It is truly a travesty.

All this **Garbage** that people are trying to get rid of can be a better supplement for your garden than any fertilizer or chemical. If you properly facilitate the decomposition of all of the garbage, it will alter chemically until it is in such a state that it can be nothing but beneficial nutrition for other plants. Therefore you can turn all the stuff you would have thrown away into top grade fertilizer for your garden.

Usually compost is maintained in a pile somewhere in your backyard. Usually the thought of a compost heap brings disturbing images to ones mind; heaps of rotten garbage emitting a horrid odor. However, if you maintain it correctly you'll be able to produce great compost without producing an offensive odor.

When you are choosing your spot where you will be putting all of these materials, you should aim for a higher square footage. Having a really deep pile of compost is not a good idea, because generally the deeper sections won't be exposed to anything that is required for the process to work. It is better to spread it all out over a large area. If you have a shed or a tool shack of some sort, it is a possibility to spread it over the roof (with boards to keep it from falling off, of course). I have seen this done several times, and it helps keep the pile out of the way while still maintaining a large square footage.

A compost heap can consist of any organic garbage from your yard, garden or kitchen. This includes leaves, grass, any leftover food that won't be eaten, or newspaper (no more than a fifth of your pile should consist of newspaper, due to it having a harder time composting with the rest of the materials). Usually if you have a barrel devoted to storing all of these things, it will fill up within several weeks. It is quite easy to obtain compost, but the hard part truly comes in getting it to compost.

After you have begun to get a large assortment of materials in your compost heap, you should moisten the whole pile. This encourages the process of composting. Also chop every element of the pile into the smallest pieces possible. As the materials start to compress and meld together as they decompose, frequently head outside and aerate the pile. You can use a shovel to mix it all up, or an aeration tool to poke dozens of tiny holes into it. Doing this will increase the oxygen flow to each part of the pile, and oxygen is required for any decomposition to take place.

If maintaining a compost pile sounds like something that would interest you, start considering the different placement options. The hardest part about maintaining a pile is choosing a spot that provides enough square footage without intruding on the rest of your yard or garden. While usually you can prevent the horrible odors that most people associate with compost heaps, it's still not a pleasant thing to have to look at whenever you go for a walk in your garden.

