



COMPOSTING SUCCESS CHECKLIST

Getting Started

- ☐ Choose your composting method (bin, tumbler, pile, worm bin, or bokashi)
- ☐ Select a location (shady spot, good drainage, easy access)
- ☐ Gather basic tools (pitchfork or shovel, bucket for kitchen scraps)
- ☐ Set up your bin or designate pile area
- ☐ Collect initial "brown" materials (dry leaves, cardboard, newspaper)

What to Compost (GREEN materials - nitrogen-rich)

- ☐ Fruit and vegetable scraps
- ☐ Coffee grounds and filters
- ☐ Tea bags (remove staples)
- ☐ Eggshells (ground)
- ☐ Fresh grass clippings
- ☐ Fresh plant trimmings
- ☐ Garden weeds (before they seed)

What to Compost (BROWN materials - carbon-rich)

- ☐ Dry leaves
- ☐ Straw or hay
- ☐ Shredded newspaper

- ☐ Cardboard (torn into small pieces)
- ☐ Wood chips or sawdust (untreated)
- ☐ Paper bags
- ☐ Dried plant stems

What NOT to Compost

- ☐ **✗** Meat, fish, or bones
- ☐ **✗** Dairy products
- ☐ **✗** Oils, grease, or fats
- ☐ **✗** Pet waste (dog or cat)
- ☐ **✗** Diseased plants
- ☐ **✗** Weeds with seeds (unless hot composting)
- ☐ **✗** Chemically treated wood or grass
- ☐ **✗** Coal or charcoal ash

Building Your Pile

- ☐ Start with 4-6 inches of brown materials as base layer
- ☐ Add 2-3 inches of green materials
- ☐ Alternate brown and green layers
- ☐ Aim for roughly 2-3 parts brown to 1 part green
- ☐ Moisten each layer (damp sponge consistency)
- ☐ Keep pile at least 3 feet × 3 feet for best heat retention

Maintenance

- ☐ Turn or mix pile every 1-2 weeks (or as needed)
- ☐ Check moisture level weekly (should feel like wrung-out sponge)
- ☐ Add water if too dry
- ☐ Add dry browns if too wet or smelly

- ☐ Monitor temperature (optional but helpful)
- ☐ Break up clumps or matted materials
- ☐ Cover pile during heavy rain (optional)

Troubleshooting Checklist

- ☐ **Smells bad?** Add more browns, turn pile, check for meat/dairy
- ☐ **Too dry?** Water lightly and turn
- ☐ **Too wet?** Add dry browns, turn to aerate
- ☐ **Not breaking down?** Turn more often, add greens, check moisture
- ☐ **Attracting pests?** Bury food scraps, avoid meat/dairy, use closed bin
- ☐ **Too cold in winter?** Insulate with straw, increase pile size

Ready-to-Use Compost Indicators

- ☐ Dark brown, crumbly texture
- ☐ Sweet, earthy smell
- ☐ No recognizable food scraps or materials
- ☐ Cool temperature (no longer generating heat)
- ☐ Can't identify original ingredients
- ☐ Ready in 2-6 months (varies by method and season)

Using Your Finished Compost

- ☐ Screen out large chunks (return to pile)
- ☐ Mix into garden beds before planting
- ☐ Use as mulch around plants
- ☐ Top-dress lawns
- ☐ Add to potting soil mix
- ☐ Make compost tea for liquid fertilizer
- ☐ Share with neighbors and friends!

Seasonal Reminders

- [] **Spring:** Start new pile, screen finished compost, add to gardens
- [] **Summer:** Monitor moisture, turn frequently, harvest finished compost
- [] **Fall:** Collect leaves, build large pile for next year
- [] **Winter:** Keep adding materials (slower decomposition is normal)

Pro Tip: Start small and simple! You don't need to do everything perfectly. Composting is forgiving—nature wants to decompose organic matter. Your main job is just to help it along.