

# Composting:

## A brief guide for the beginning composter

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Environmentalists tell us that home composting of garden and kitchen waste can save the planet. Composting stops organic waste becoming toxic trash in landfill sites and adding methane to our greenhouse gas issues. Composting reduces the need for irrigation in the garden, saving precious water resources. And composting feeds plants and the soil, making oil-based fertilizers unnecessary and saving gardeners money.

Composters can be serious people, muttering about carbon to nitrogen ratios and activators and shrouding the whole process in mystery. Composting doesn't have to be complicated. Follow these ten simple tips and you'll have no problems turning your trash into garden treasure.

### Do's

**Do - Add greens'** - Soft garden waste and vegetable-based kitchen waste add nitrogen and water to the compost, helping it to break down. They also contain other plant nutrients, making your compost a valuable addition to the garden.



**Do - Add browns'** - Carbon-rich material such as shredded twigs, cardboard or scrunched up newspaper feeds the critters that are munching their way through your waste. It also adds air, and if you get a good mix of materials in your compost then you don't need to turn it.



**Do - Add water** - Compost bins generally come with a lid to keep moisture in, but if you don't have one you will need to add water occasionally. A dry heap won't compost.

**Do - Put the bin on soil** - Access to the soil lets microbes into and excess water out of your bin.

**Do - Put the bin in sun** - Cold compost will break down eventually, but for quicker results hotter is better.

### Don'ts

**Don't - Add meat or dairy** - The bin will smell and attract vermin.

**Don't - Add doodoo** - Pet poo can spread diseases. Waste from vegetarian animals such as rabbits is fine, but not cat and dog waste.

**Don't - Add seeding weeds** - You'll just spread your weed problem around the garden with the compost.

**Don't - Add diseased plant material** - You'll just be adding to your problems. Master composters can build compost heaps that get hot enough to kill weeds and diseases, but keep it simple to begin with.



**Don't - Stress** - Composting is a natural process that happens by itself. A warm heap with a good range of materials and a little water will rot down in no time.

