

COMPOSTING

Layering principle: Layer roughly equal amounts of “green” material in alternating 3-4” inch tiers. Water each layer.

Material should be moist, not soggy.

Composting is an aerobic method of decomposing soil wastes such as leaves, grass clippings, weeds, farm/stable manure and kitchen scraps into a usable soil amendment

Compost improves Florida’s sandy soils by adding nutrients, increasing the soil's ability to hold water, and making the soil more biologically active and healthy. It needs:

Oxygen from the air for the decomposition process). Water in the right amounts. Too much or too little of either can slow the process down!

Carbon as an energy source for bacteria and fungi. High carbon materials tend to be brown and dry. Dry leaves, small twigs, paper products.

Nitrogen as a source of protein for bacterial and fungi. These materials are usually green and wet. Kitchen scraps, manure, weeds.

Compost can be made in bins, plastic bags, garbage cans, commercial composters or just heaps on the ground.

Shred/Chop/Grind ingredients to speed things up.

Mix the brown-green/dry-wet materials in equal volumes

If more nitrogen is needed add blood meal, manure, alfalfa meal to low nitrogen materials such as straw or other dry leaves.

Turning the compost occasionally will add air.

More information:

Compost Tips for the Home Gardener.

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep323>

Check UF/IFAS Extension Seminole County Eventbrite for classes!

<http://seminole-extension.eventbrite.com>

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Composting is an aerobic method of decomposing soil wastes such leaves, grass clippings, weeds, farm/stable manure and kitchen waste into a usable soil amendment. Compost can be made in bins, plastic bags, garbage cans, commercial composters or just heaps on the ground.

Compost improves Florida sandy soils by adding nutrients, increasing the soil's moisture holding capacity and making the soil more biologically active and healthy. Compost can be used as a mulch, soil amendment, or as part of a potting mix.

Key equally important ingredients are:

- Carbon as an energy source for bacteria and fungi. High carbon materials tend to be brown and dry
- Nitrogen as a source of protein for bacterial and fungi. These materials are usually green and wet.
- Oxygen from the air for oxidizing the carbon, which is the decomposition processes
- Water in the right amounts

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Tips:

- Shredding/chopping/grinding ingredients will speed up the composting process.
- Too much water or too little water will slow the decomposition process.
- Mixing the brown-green/dry-wet materials in equal volumes may be a good balance
- If more nitrogen is needed one may add blood meal, manure, alfalfa meal to low nitrogen materials such as straw or other dry leaves.
- Too little or too much oxygen (air) will slow the process.
- Turning the compost occasionally will add air.

A new pile of green and brown materials will heat up rapidly then cool down after 4-7 day. This is the time to turn the material and allow the pile to heat again. Occasionally turn and water (if dry) the material. Commercial composters, garbage cans and plastic bags can make it easier to turn the materials during the composting process. The process can be completed in as little as 6 weeks.