



# City of Albany Backyard Composting Guide

# Welcome to the City of Albany Backyard Composting Program!

This guide will help you use your backyard compost bin to build a healthy and productive compost pile.

If you ever come across issues or have questions that are not covered by this guide please call us at (518) 434-2489 (CITY) or visit [www.albanyrecycles.com](http://www.albanyrecycles.com).



# Why Should I Compost?

*Food waste accounts for approximately 20% of our household trash.*



Did you know food waste accounts for approximately 20% of our household trash? Composting keeps organics out of the landfill, reduces waste and puts valuable nutrients back into our food cycle.

When food scraps end up in the landfill they emit methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. By composting in your backyard, you are diverting this waste from the landfill and reducing your carbon footprint.



## What Goes In?

Fruits, vegetables, coffee grounds, tea bags (non-plastic), egg shells, nut shells, breads, grains, pasta, unbleached paper, non-weed plants and flowers.



FRUITS + VEGGIES



PASTA+ GRAINS



UNBLEACHED PAPER



BREAD



NON-WEED PLANTS



NUT SHELLS



EGG SHELLS



COFFEE GROUNDS



PAPER TEABAGS

## What Stays Out?

Meat, fish, shellfish, bones, dairy, all plastics, compostable cutlery, packaging and plates, bleached paper including, paper towels and napkins, paper egg cartons, weeds, large branches, pieces of wood and pet waste.



FISH



PET WASTE



LARGE BRANCHES  
AND WOOD



BONES



MEAT



DAIRY



SHELLFISH



WEEDS



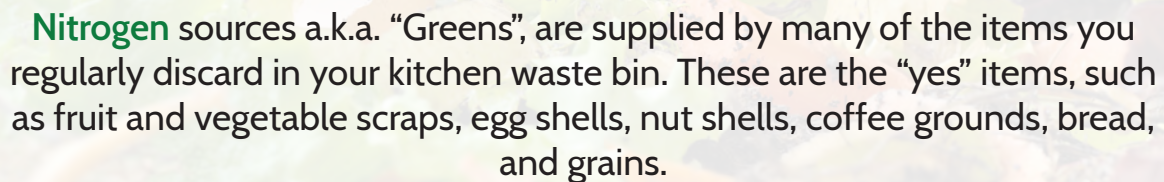
BLEACHED PAPER  
PRODUCTS



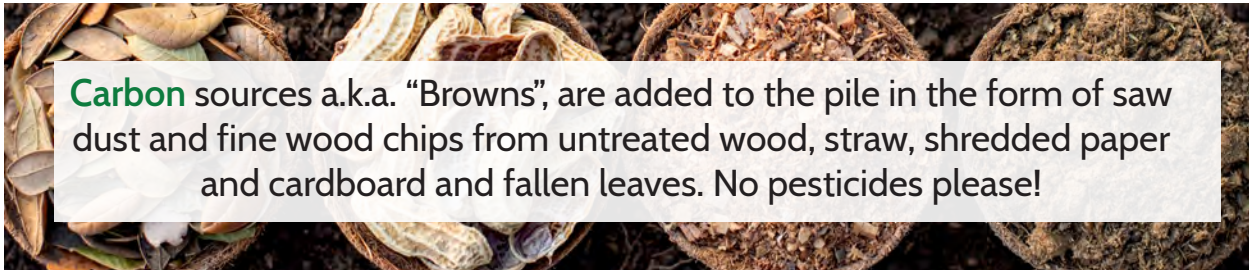
PLASTIC, METAL OR GLASS  
CONTAINERS, CUTLERY, CUPS OR PLATES

# Composting Instructions

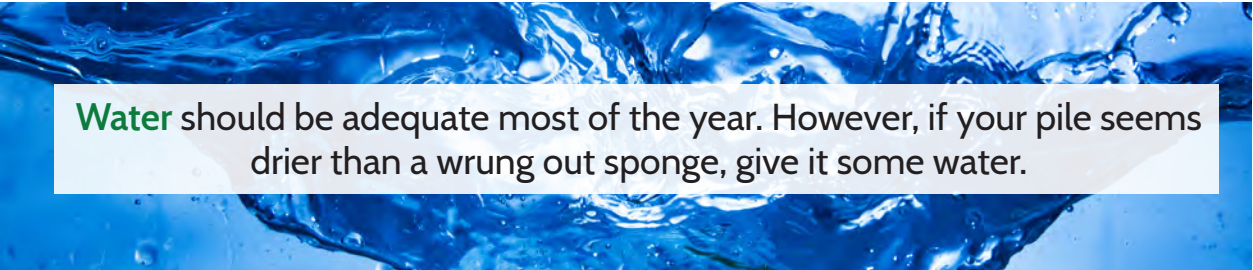
**Composting is the process of recycling organic waste through decomposition.** It's a simple process that results in a nutrient rich dirt-like material that can be used to improve soil health. The recipe for a backyard compost pile is quite simple. All you need is nitrogen, carbon, and water. That's it!



**Nitrogen** sources a.k.a. “Greens”, are supplied by many of the items you regularly discard in your kitchen waste bin. These are the “yes” items, such as fruit and vegetable scraps, egg shells, nut shells, coffee grounds, bread, and grains.



**Carbon** sources a.k.a. “Browns”, are added to the pile in the form of saw dust and fine wood chips from untreated wood, straw, shredded paper and cardboard and fallen leaves. No pesticides please!



**Water** should be adequate most of the year. However, if your pile seems drier than a wrung out sponge, give it some water.

Ideally you want a layer of “Greens” followed by a layer of “Browns” that is at least double the amount of the layer of “Greens”. You would continue this layering throughout the process of building your compost pile. When your pile heats up, you can turn your pile, but it's not required. An unturned static pile will decompose, although not as quickly.

In the event that your backyard compost bin gets completely filled you can create a secondary pile. Your secondary pile should be placed in a space that is at least three feet long and three feet wide. To avoid pests you should choose to contain your secondary pile in an additional plastic bin, metal fencing or a homemade wooden compost bin.

## Composting Through the Seasons



**Winter:** Keep adding material to your backyard compost bin. The process will slow down in cold months however, the material will continue to break down. Once Spring arrives the process will pick up speed.



**Spring:** To speed up the process give your compost a stir and add some soil to introduce beneficial microbes. This is a good time of the year to dig out some finished compost from the bottom of your bin and add it to your garden beds or donate it to a neighbor or a local community garden.



**Summer:** Keep adding alternating layers of Greens and Browns to your pile. If your pile seems dry due to the warmer weather add some water.



**Fall:** Save your leaves and add as a carbon source throughout the fall and winter months. This is another good time to dig some finished compost out from the bottom of your bin and add it to your garden beds or donate it to a neighbor or a local community garden.

## FAQs

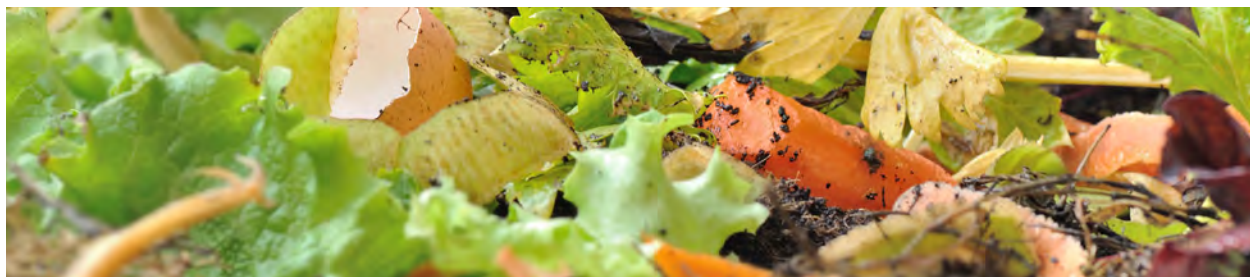
### Q: What should I do if my pile starts to smell?

A: Add carbon-rich “Browns” such as saw dust and fine wood chips from untreated wood, straw, dried leaves or shredded paper/cardboard.



### Q: Why won't my pile heat up?

A: The microbes in your pile require nitrogen-rich “Greens” to stay active in the decomposition process. Adding fruit and vegetable scraps or coffee grounds to your pile will usually do the trick by helping to accelerate the decomposition process. This in turn raises your compost pile's temperature.



### Q: What if I run out of “Brown” materials? Where can I source that from?

A: Get in touch with us! The best way to reach us is to call (518) 434-2489 (CITY) or visit [www.albanyrecycles.com](http://www.albanyrecycles.com).

### Q: How long will it take for my backyard compost bin to produce finished compost?

A: Most people find that they can harvest finished compost from the bottom of their backyard compost bin every 6 months or so. However, if you have a good mix of “Greens” and “Browns”, and keep the pile from getting too wet or dry, you will find that you can “cook” a batch of compost in as little as 6 weeks.



## FAQs

### Q: What does finished compost look and smell like?

A: Finished compost should have reduced in size by about 50%. It is usually dark brown in appearance with little to no recognizable items still visible. Compost smell is also a significant indicator. Finished compost should smell earthy or like dirt. If it smells sour or like ammonia, it's not ready yet.



### Q: Do I need to turn my compost pile?

A: Not necessarily. One of the main benefits of layered composting is that it reduces the amount of physical labor you have to put in to make sure that your compost system is healthy and productive. Properly layering your materials based on the tips in this guide and adding water when needed should create optimal temperature and moisture conditions to produce quality compost.

### Q: What do I do if I see a lot of insects buzzing around my pile?

A: Insects such as gnats, millipedes, bees and ants are a normal part of composting; An active compost pile will create enough heat to kill their eggs and reduce the nuisance insects. Make sure you are following the steps listed in this guide and you shouldn't see an excessive number of insects.



## Features of your Earth Machine Backyard Composter



After a few months, your kitchen scraps near the bottom of your composter will have decomposed to a point where you cannot identify the materials you added, and will look much like soil.

**There are two ways of harvesting this finished compost**, one when you just want a few shovels of compost, and another when you want as much finished compost as possible, or to make maximum space for fresh scraps. Your Earth Machine composter comes with a door at the bottom for quick access to finished compost. Just lift the door and dig the material out of the bottom.

# Earth Machine Assembly Instructions

**Step 1** - Twist and remove the lid.



**Step 2** - Place the bottom section on the ground, and set the top section on top of it.

**IMPORTANT:** Make sure that the arrows on the top and bottom sections line up. Also, the bottom of the top section should sit in the groove on the top of the bottom section.



**Step 3** - Check the outside and inside with your hand to ensure the 6 tabs line up with the 6 slots.



**Step 4** - To ensure the tabs are completely in the slots, push down firmly on the two halves of the composter starting at the arrows and working fully around the composting rim.

**Step 5** - To confirm that all 6 tabs are in place, turn the unit upside down and make a visual check.

**Step 6** - Slide the harvest door in place, bending slightly if necessary.



**Step 7** - Put the lid on by lining up the arrow on the lid with the arrow on the top of the composting unit. Twist the lid to lock or control ventilation.



**Step 8** - Once you have determined the location, you can anchor the composting unit to the ground by screwing the four pegs into the ground at a slight angle. To maintain correct hole spacing, ensure the harvest door is in place before screwing down the pegs.





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