

# Quick Composting



If you started a garden and want compost right away, consider making quick compost. With a supply of organic material, you can make compost in as little as 12 to 14 days.

For home gardeners, the minimum size of a compost pile is 3 feet by 3 feet by 3 feet. Any smaller and the pile may not heat correctly. The microorganisms that decompose the organic material require oxygen. It is important that you do not make the pile too large because oxygen only penetrates 18 to 24 inches in all directions. Below are the three requirements for quick composting.

## **Chopping or shredding**

Shred or chop organic materials finely. This increases surface area and enables rapid decomposition.

## **Blending**

Microorganisms, nitrogen activator, and composting material should be blended completely to ensure contact among the major ingredients. You

can do this by feeding the raw materials through a chipper/shredder, or mixing them in a container, bag, or pile.

## **Frequent turning**

Turn contents of the compost pile every 2 to 3 days to encourage rapid decomposition. The recipe for quick composting is similar to regular composting. Start with 4 to 5 parts of organic materials such as shredded leaves or grass clippings. In addition, you need about 1 part of garden soil, and a high-nitrogen fertilizer material such as commercial fertilizer, blood-meal, or similar nitrogen source.

Pulverize organic material. If possible, blend in soil and fertilizer during the shredding process. Feed materials through a commercial shredder/chipper or a bagging-type lawnmower, catching shredded material in the bag.

Blend composting material and moisten thoroughly. Place in a plastic-lined container or pile and cover loosely with plastic to keep materials from drying out. Decomposing organisms need oxygen. To prevent anaerobic fermentation, which slows decomposition and creates off odors, do not cover or seal completely.

Using an implement such as a spading fork, turn or agitate the compost every 2 to 3 days. The compost should start heating to the center of the container immediately. The process should continue for the first 10 to 12 days. If you notice an off odor coming from the pile, open it up to aerate and agitate to incorporate oxygen into to the pile. Replace water as

needed, keeping compost moist but not too wet or saturated.

In 12 to 14 days, you should notice a decrease in the temperature of the pile and volume reduced by about half. This means the quick composting process is essentially complete. The composting processes may continue over time, but the compost can be used safely as a garden additive or mulch.

The time required for quick compost depends on the fineness of materials and how often the pile is turned. If you have difficulty getting the process to work quickly, try shredding materials to a finer texture and encourage thorough blending of the organic material, soil, and nitrogen activator.

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