

# Compost

The surest way to improve your soil is to make and spread compost - the world's best fertilizer. Compost is the remains of once-living things broken down by soil bacteria and fungi to a dark brown crumbly state, making the nutrients available again to a new generation of plants.



- *Compost contents.* The rule is that “just about anything that used to be alive” is fair game for the compost bin. However, certain items require more time to break down than others, so it's best to have two compost piles or bins. The first will take about a year and a half to two years to be ready for garden use; the second will take two-three years.

- > Pile #1

- Most kitchen leavings (because meat and oily foods can attract animals, they are best avoided)
- Coffee grounds
- Egg shells
- Shellfish shells
- Seaweed
- Animal manure (be sure that it does not contain wood shavings from the barn)

- > Pile #2

- Corn husks and cobs
- Leaves (recently fallen leaves are acidic)
- Woody plant stalks

Leave grass clippings on the lawn after mowing, for they are a valuable nutrient source (*see Lawns section, p. 7*).

- *Compost bins.* You may simply start compost piles in a corner of your property, but bins will contain the contents and help to retain moisture. Your bins should be made out of wire mesh or planks, not plastic tubs or drums, which don't allow for air circulation.
- *Additional information.* The information above describes the simplest composting method. Additional techniques can be found online.