



## Composting Fact Sheet

Composting is the breaking down of organic matter such as garden clippings and kitchen scraps into a nutrient-rich friable material. When the organic matter is combined with microorganisms, warm temperatures, sustained moisture levels, and is well aerated, the decomposition process creates compost.

Compost is useful in the garden as a soil conditioner and contains the full range of nutrients needed for plant growth.

### Benefits of Composting

Shire residents can play their part in reducing garden and food waste going to landfill. These organic types of waste in our landfill decompose over time and in turn produce gases, mostly in the form of methane that add to the impact of climate change. Methane's impact is 34 times greater than carbon dioxide over a 100-year period, according to the latest IPCC Assessment Report.

When organic material is composted rather than buried in landfill, the amount of methane produced is prevented or reduced because the process is aerobic (material breaking down with microbes, such as fungi and bacteria, in the presence of oxygen). If that waste were to go to landfill, decomposition and fermentation occurs anaerobically (without oxygen) and methane is produced and released into the atmosphere.

### Composting Systems

Various systems are available for purchase or you can make your own compost system to suit your needs. All of these work well, although each has their own pros and cons:

- Open bins or bays generally allow easy turning for aeration and can take large amounts of food and green waste. Be aware of attracting pests and cover food waste with other organic material.
- Closed bins are neat and convenient; however turning the decomposing material can be more difficult.
- Turning units such as the Tumbleweed aerate well and are highly pest-proof; however have no contact with the soil to enable earthworms and other microbes to migrate.
- Bokashi kits are small, can be used indoors and can accept almost all food waste.

### Composting Method

- Begin with a layer of twigs or sticks at the bottom to assist aeration and drainage.
- Balance your compost with alternate layers of –
  - 'browns' or carbon rich products e.g. dry leaves, dry grass, hay, shredded paper or cardboard. These decompose slowly.
  - 'greens' or nitrogen rich foods e.g. vegetable and fruit scraps, green garden waste, egg shells, tea leaves, coffee grounds, or manure. These are rapidly decomposing materials. 'Greens' can be added more regularly than 'browns'.
- Keep your compost moist, but not wet.
- Turn over to aerate weekly to speed up decomposition. Use a garden fork or compost corkscrew to turn it.
- Compost will take anywhere from 2-6 months to be created depending on temperature and aeration. It is ready when it has a dark and crumbly texture.
- Other useful ingredients can be added such as lime, dolomite, blood and bone, dynamic lifter, wood ash and soil.

Use compost as a soil conditioner, mulch, part of a potting mix, top dressing for lawns or as a fertiliser in your garden.

*Note that compost may be a possible source of fungal and other diseases to humans, so wearing a mask during turning and final distribution is recommended.*



## FACT SHEET

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## What you leave out

To keep your compost system healthy, do not add the following:

- meat scraps and bones
- dairy products
- fats (used vegetable cooking oil is ok)
- cat and dog faeces
- diseased plant material
- bread products (attract mice)

These items may attract pests, create strong odours when they decompose, and may carry harmful pathogens.

The following items should not be added as they will not decompose properly:

- large branches
- magazines
- metals, plastic and glass

## Bokashi bins

Bokashi bins can accept meat and dairy products, and other types of food which are not able to go in a compost system.

Purchased Bokashi bran is added to decompose the matter.

The fermentation process does not smell, so the container can be kept indoors.

A nutrient-rich liquid is produced via the tap and can be used as a fertiliser.

When the bin is full, the resultant waste is to be buried in the garden to improve your garden soil.



## Compost troubleshooting

Problem	Cause	Solution
<b>Taking too long to break down</b>	Too dry, not enough air, not the right mix of browns and greens	Add water, turn regularly, balance greens and browns
<b>Smelly</b>	Too wet or acidic, not enough air	Rebuild with dry brown layers and egg shells or dolomite to neutralise, turn regularly
<b>Flies or rats/mice</b>	Vinegar flies are harmless but house/blow flies and mice/rats may be attracted by meat or dairy products	Cover mix with layer of browns or soil, do not feed compost with meat or dairy products
<b>Too wet</b>	Too much water or moist green organics	Only dampen mix, do not saturate, add brown organics for drainage
<b>Lots of ants</b>	Compost is too dry	Add water to moisten, mix in moist greens

Source: Sunshine Coast Regional Council website

## How can you contact us?



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