

# COMPOSTING AT HOME

*Did you know* that in the U.S., food is the single most common material sent to landfills, comprising 24.1% of municipal solid waste (*Environmental Protection Agency, 2024*)? Composting organic materials instead of sending them to landfills reduces methane (a powerful greenhouse gas), reduces waste and ensures valuable nutrients are returned to our ecosystem.

You can support a sustainable future by composting in your own back yard! Purchase a compost bin or build one of your own to reap the benefits of fresh compost.



## DOS & DON'TS OF COMPOSTING

✓ **DO** include a mix of green and brown materials. Greens are nitrogen-rich materials, and browns are carbon-rich materials. Both are crucial elements in your compost, though more carbon/browns are needed compared to nitrogen/greens (the ideal ration is 30:1 carbon to nitrogen). View a list of green and brown materials, as well as materials to avoid, on page two. Don't forget to add moisture, which is essential for organisms breaking down compost.



✗ **DON'T** leave non-compostable materials on compostable items. Fruits, vegetables, cotton tea bags and cardboard are excellent materials for your composting station, but produce stickers, staples, labels and packing tape are not!

✓ **DO** consider the best location for your compost pile or bin. The most important elements to consider when placing your compost station are access to oxygen and water. Avoid placing it next to a fence, which may impede air flow, and ensure a water source is available nearby. Your compost should also be easily accessible for regular turning, which helps materials break down evenly.



✗ **DON'T** let your pile get too stinky. Several factors can impact the speed of breakdown and — ahem — stench of your compost pile. If your materials are too dry, they will break down slower. If they are too wet, your pile may begin to smell. Keep an eye on your compost pile and add browns, water and air circulation as needed.

✓ **DO** use your compost to grow healthier plants! Compost can improve soil quality, assist in retaining moisture and nutrients, and reduce the need for pesticides and fertilizers in your garden beds.

**Larger composting operations** reach higher temperatures and can break down items such as meat, dairy and oils, which are not recommended in home composting. Summit Metro Parks has partnered with Rubber City Reuse to make sustainably disposing of these items easy. Learn more about SMP's community compost bins, including acceptable materials, at [bit.ly/SMPGreenerFuture](https://bit.ly/SMPGreenerFuture).



# Materials for Composting at Home

FOOD	YARD	MISC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Anything made of flour (bread, cookies, noodles)</li> <li>✓ Coffee grounds and filters</li> <li>✓ Cotton tea bags (remove staples)</li> <li>✓ Eggshells</li> <li>✓ Fruit and vegetable scraps (including cores and rinds)</li> <li>✓ Grains</li> <li>✓ Nuts and shells</li> <li>✗ Animal products</li> <li>✗ Bones</li> <li>✗ Cooking oils</li> <li>✗ Dairy products</li> <li>✗ Eggs</li> <li>✗ Fat and grease</li> <li>✗ Honey products</li> <li>✗ Liquids</li> <li>✗ Meat</li> <li>✗ Seafood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Garden and lawn clippings (fresh and dry)</li> <li>✓ Hay and straw</li> <li>✓ Leaves and plant material</li> <li>✓ Old herbs</li> <li>✓ Small twigs and branches</li> <li>✓ Wood chips</li> <li>✗ Animal feces</li> <li>✗ Anything treated with chemical fertilizers</li> <li>✗ Black walnut tree leaves or twigs and seed husks (releases substances that might be harmful to plants)</li> <li>✗ Diseased plants</li> <li>✗ Insect infested plants</li> <li>✗ Seed heads and roots from weeds</li> <li>✗ Tree stumps or logs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 100% cotton and wool rags (without chemicals or synthetic oils)</li> <li>✓ Cardboard</li> <li>✓ Hair and fur (not color treated or bleached)</li> <li>✓ Newspapers</li> <li>✓ Paper bags</li> <li>✓ Paper towels/napkins (without chemicals or synthetic oils)</li> <li>✓ Sawdust</li> <li>✓ Shredded blank paper</li> <li>✗ Cat litter</li> <li>✗ Chemicals</li> <li>✗ Coal or charcoal ashes</li> <li>✗ Dryer and vacuum lint</li> <li>✗ Heavily coated or printed paper (magazines, catalogs, cards)</li> <li>✗ Human feces</li> <li>✗ Plastic, metal or glass</li> <li>✗ Stickers</li> <li>✗ Styrofoam</li> <li>✗ Synthetic fabrics</li> </ul>
✓ Green / Nitrogen-Rich Materials    ✓ Brown / Carbon-Rich Materials    ✗ Materials to Avoid		

Composting at home can take many different forms, depending on the amount of space one has, their experience level, the amount of time dedicated to it, and the type and quantity of organic materials. This chart works mostly for those with limited space and time. We encourage you to do further research and attend naturalist-led composting programs to learn more. Happy composting!