

# Composting

## Fact Sheet

*What you don't eat your garden will!*



### The good news:

- ✓ Compost can improve soil structure and add nutrients to your garden.
- ✓ Compost and mulch help retain water in the soil.
- ✓ Composting reduces the cost of rubbish disposal to the community.
- ✓ Composting is nature's way of recycling.
- ✓ Composting is fun and easy!

### How to Compost

- Put a small container with a lid in your kitchen to collect food scraps. Choose a container easy to carry and clean.
- Choose a location for your compost bin on earth or grass – not pavement. Sunny or shady it doesn't matter, but partial shade is ideal. Choose somewhere easily accessible so that it's not a chore to take out food scraps, but not too far from the garden where you will use the compost.
- If you can, have two compost bins. One as the 'working bin' that you add to every day, and one as the 'digesting bin' that you leave to break down once full so that you can use your compost sooner.
- Start adding different materials, making sure that over time you have a good mix of 'greens' and 'browns' (see below).
- **Make sure you turn your compost regularly – at least once a month.** This will help it to break down more quickly, discourage rodents from nesting and reduce or prevent smelliness. If you remember only one thing from this fact sheet: **'turn my compost!'**.
- Monitor air and moisture levels
  - Too dry – spray with water
  - Too wet – add twigs, leaves, shredded paper or dry grass clippings
- When one compost bin is full, don't add anything more to it, but keep turning it regularly for 4-12 weeks (in the meantime, start filling your second bin). After a month or more your compost should look like rich dark soil, and is ready to use on your garden. Scrape away any materials that have not decomposed and place them on the side to put back into the compost bin.
- Dig the composted material into your garden beds.
- **Enjoy the fruits of your labour!**

### Have a good balance between 'Greens' and 'Browns'

Greens (nitrogen rich)		Browns (carbon rich)	
✓ Fruit & vegetable scraps	✓ Citrus and onions (balanced by browns)	✓ Dry grass and weeds (seedless ones)	✓ Toilet rolls
✓ Tea leaves and bags	✓ Small quantities of bread, rice & pasta only	✓ Autumn leaves	✓ Egg cartons
✓ Coffee grounds	✓ Blood and bone	✓ Straw	✓ Paper towels & napkins
✓ Green leaves	✓ Fresh manures	✓ Shredded paper & cardboard	✓ Ash
✓ Flowers	✗ No meat or dairy	✓ Wood chips	✓ Dolomite
✓ Weeds and grass clippings		✓ Egg shells	✓ Wood chips / saw dust
			✓ Vacuum dust / hair



## Compost Trouble Shooting

Problem	Possible causes	Solutions
<b>Too slow to break down</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Too dry</li> <li>Not the right mix of 'greens' and 'browns'</li> <li>Not enough air</li> <li>Too cold</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make sure you have a diversity of green and brown material and that you keep it aerated and moist</li> <li>Turn more frequently</li> <li>Add more materials to ensure you have enough mass to generate heat</li> <li>Add compost worms to your heap (not necessary, but it could help)</li> </ul>
<b>Flies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most of the flies in and around a compost heap are small vinegar flies which are quite harmless</li> <li>If the flies are house flies or blowflies, then they are being attracted by meat or dairy foods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cover organic waste with a thin layer of soil, dry grass, leaves or dolomite to reduce the acidity</li> <li>Avoid adding meat or dairy products</li> </ul>
<b>Smelly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Too wet</li> <li>Too acidic</li> <li>Not enough air</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sulphur (rotten eggs) smell = too wet. Add dry material such as dry grass clippings or shredded newspaper</li> <li>Ammonia (acidic) smell = too much nitrogen, add garden lime, ash or dolomite, cut down on acidic foods like citrus and add more 'browns'</li> <li>Turn the heap more frequently and add twigs to make air spaces</li> </ul>
<b>Ants &amp; Slaters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heap is too dry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regularly spray with water</li> <li>Cover each layer of food with a handful of soil</li> <li>Ants and slaters aren't really a problem, so if you don't mind having them there, leave them be!</li> </ul>
<b>Too wet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Too much water has been added</li> <li>Organic waste is too moist</li> <li>Not enough drainage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mix in some dry material such as dry grass clippings or shredded newspaper</li> <li>Make sure the lid is closed to keep rain out</li> <li>Improve the drainage under the heap (not relevant for a compost tumbler)</li> </ul>
<b>Rats, mice &amp; other animals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attracted by uncovered food</li> <li>Warmth of heap</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turn regularly to prevent rodents nesting</li> <li>Cover each layer of food with a layer of soil</li> <li>Place the bin on a layer of fine wire mesh</li> <li>If all else fails, invest in a compost tumbler as they are rodent proof</li> </ul>
<b>Too dry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not enough moist organics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spray with water – but make sure you don't overwater. A dry bin is easier to fix than a wet bin</li> <li>Try to add more moist organics, such as fruit scraps</li> </ul>

*Useful websites*

[foodwise.com.au](http://foodwise.com.au)  
[compostrevolution.com.au](http://compostrevolution.com.au)  
[sgaonline.org.au](http://sgaonline.org.au)  
[frankston.vic.gov.au](http://frankston.vic.gov.au)

[reducelandfill.org](http://reducelandfill.org)  
 Username: Frankston City  
 Password: Frankston