

## **COMPOSTING – THE INSIDE SCOOP**

Composting is a helpful way to clean up our planet and create lush healthy gardens. Landfill space is at a premium and composting is one of the ways to reduce your amount of garbage. Composters let you recycle leaves, lawn clippings and organic food wastes that would otherwise be tossed away. Compost takes an average of about three months before it can be worked into your garden soil. You will know when it is ready because the compost will have a rich dark brown colouring, crumble between your fingers and smell woody.

### **Why Compost?**

Compost improves soil texture, structure, aeration and water retention. It makes clay soils lighter and sandy soils retain water better. That's why compost is often called 'black gold.' Mixing compost in the soil improves soil fertility, promotes healthier root development of plants and maintains a proper PH balance.

### **Make your own**

The type of bin can be very simple - four feet square by three to four feet high. Possible materials you could use include wire, concrete blocks, wood (cedar is preferable), or bricks. You will need to build a three sided enclosure with removable slats on the fourth side to allow you to mix the heap around every three to four weeks. Allow your compost bin to have air movement to speed up the decomposition process.

### **Placement**

Your composter should be in an easily accessible spot in your garden, within reach of a garden hose; choose a fairly level spot with good drainage. If the compost becomes too dry you will need to water it down so that it feels sponge damp. Everyone will make several trips a week to the bin even in the

winter; however, it does not need to be a major focal point in your garden. Ornamental grasses or other taller perennials may be planted in the area to screen the composter.

### **What to put inside?**

Garden refuse and kitchen waste can be thrown into the composter. Avoid meat, bones, fats and dairy products. Heighten the nutritional content of your compost by adding coffee grounds (nitrogen), banana peels (potassium) and egg shells (calcium). Your plants will love it and thrive!

### **Where do you buy one?**

You can purchase composters during Environment Days scheduled from April to October around the GTA. For more information about times and location visit the City of Toronto's official website [www.toronto.ca/environment\\_days](http://www.toronto.ca/environment_days) (put an underscore between environment and days) or call the Events line at 416-392-9585. Don't forget to dispose of any hazardous waste on these Environment Days as well. Recycling is part of being a responsible global neighbour and regenerating the environment for future generations.

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