

## Basics of Composting

Compost is decomposed organic matter that is useful for improving soil fertility. The active process of making compost is simply creating a setting where soil microorganisms can break down plant matter. We call this setting the “compost bins”. The decomposition will occur all by itself given enough time. To speed up the process we try to keep a balance of 1 part “green matter” to 4 parts “brown matter”. This means for every shovel- full of green matter we add at least 4 of brown matter.

The green matter is high in nitrogen and includes fresh untreated grass clippings, coffee grounds, fresh vegetable trimmings, and green plant trimmings. The brown matter is high in carbon and includes dried leaves, shredded paper, newspaper, paper towel rolls and brown paper bags.

Not everything brown and green is good for the compost bin. Remember what goes in to the bin will eventually be added back into the garden beds and becomes part of the next season’s harvest. Here is a list of things we **NEVER** add to the compost bin and should be placed in the large trash bin.

- **NO** trimmings, grass or leaves from yards that have been chemically treated with pesticides or herbicides. Pesticides will stop the decomposition in the bin and herbicides can survive the composting process and impact the next season’s harvest. **When in doubt- leave it out!!**
- **NO** weeds as they may contain seeds.
- **NO** diseased plants- dispose of them in the trash bin.
- **NO** paper or cardboard that contains ink other than black or that has been treated with antifungal agents or pesticides.

There are several compost bins near the garden beds. One will be an active bin, one will be a supply of brown matter (dried leaves or shredded paper/cardboard), and possibly a bin of finished compost. Feel free to make additions to the active pile and top with a layer of brown matter. Each bin will be labeled appropriately. Finished compost will be spread on the garden beds at the beginning of each garden season Spring and Fall by the Garden Coordinator.