



“Leaf” It in Your Yard (Composting) *Tips for Setting Up, Maintaining, and Harvesting* *a Compost Pile*



Set-Up

- 1) Select a space in your yard.
- 2) Decide how to contain your pile (i.e., wire fencing, commercial composter, wedged against a fence in a corner, mounded in a forested area with no container, etc.).
- 3) Gather sticks (if available) and spread them on the ground in your pile area. This will allow air to circulate under the pile.
- 4) Add a one-foot-thick layer of leaves, a shovel of soil, and grass clippings (if available). Moisten (don't soak) the layer.
- 5) Repeat layering/moistening until your pile is 3'x3'x3' or larger.

Feeding

Adding kitchen food scraps, grass clippings, and other plant-based wastes is a good way to add nutrients to your pile while reducing landfill waste and unpleasant trash can odors. Note: Do not add meat or animal products such as large amounts of cheese or dog/cat manure. They take longer to decompose and some (meats/manure) can contain harmful bacteria that can cycle into produce if the compost soil is used for gardening.

Food Scraps: Collect meal scraps in an empty margarine or ice cream tub in your refrigerator until full (once or twice a week). Dig a hole in the middle of the compost pile and dump the food in. Cover the food with leaves to reduce the risk of fruit flies.

Grass Clippings/Small Sticks/Leaves: Simply spread the yardwaste over top of the pile and mix in the next time you turn the pile.

Maintenance (biweekly or monthly)

- 1) Carefully remove the compost bin and put it next to the pile.
- 2) Turn and water the pile using a pitchfork or shovel and a two-liter bottle. Refill the compost bin starting at the top of the compost and working your way down. If you have no compost bin, simply move the pile four feet over as you turn it. While turning, water any areas of the pile that are dry and crumbly. Do not put a large amount of water in any one spot. Never use more than four liters of water on an average sized pile (3'x3'x3'). Remember, the pile should be moist (not wet), like a wrung-out sponge.

Harvesting

Once composting is complete, you will have humus (dark, rich, soil). Mix this soil into your garden, add it around trees, sprinkle it on your lawn, use it as topsoil for areas of new grass seed, put a spoonful in your potted plants each week when watering...the possibilities are endless! Note: Humus is more powerful than regular soil. It is so nutrient rich that it can actually kill plants if used in too high a concentration! For best results, use 1/3 humus with 2/3 other soils.