



David
Suzuki
Foundation

SOLUTIONS ARE IN OUR NATURE

composting **DOs** & **DON'Ts**

DOs

- Alternate layers of nitrogen-rich greens and carbon-rich browns.

great greens:

- Vegetable peelings
- Rotten fruit
- Leaves
- Coffee grounds
- Tea leaves
- Manure from vegetarian pets – rabbits, gerbils, guinea pigs, sheep, horses, cows, llamas, etc

best browns:

- Dry leaves, grass and plant stalks
- Shredded newsprint (non-toxic inks only) or brown paper (eg paper bags)
- Cut-up cardboard (recycle large pieces)
- Corncobs
- Straw
- Other paper (unbleached paper towels, napkins, etc – wet is okay, not greasy)

- Also add:

- Rinsed, crushed eggshells
- Pet hair, to help discourage rodents
- Fireplace ash
- Dryer lint

tips:

- Select a level, partially-shaded spot for your bin with good water drainage. Be sure it is at least 20 cm - 30 cm (8 in - 12 in) away from walls, fences, bushes, doors and windows.
- Cut kitchen scraps up into smaller pieces – the smaller, the faster the decomposition.
- Whenever you add any food layer (green or eggshells), top it off with brown material. Keep a pile of dry browns near the bin to sprinkle on top each time you add kitchen scraps.
- The beneficial microorganisms in your compost pile need oxygen. If they are too compacted (as in a landfill), they will produce methane as they decompose, a greenhouse gas. Leave lots of air space in your bin and mix the contents every week or two with an aerator tool, or an old broom handle.
- Collect dry leaves and grass in a separate, dry container. Then you can use them year-round.
- Compost is generally ready to use after two or three months but aging the pile another one to two months before putting it on lawns or garden will improve it.
- If fruit flies bother you, keep your kitchen collection container in the fridge or freezer.
- A glass or metal container for collecting kitchen waste won't hang onto odors the way plastics do, and a tight-fitting lid should keep the fruit flies out.
- Don't be alarmed if your pile steams or shrinks – that means it's working and materials are decomposing.
- You might like to sift out large chunks or pieces that haven't yet decomposed before using the composted materials. Just put that stuff back in top of the bin.
- If you're making your own bin, the ideal size is about one cubic meter.
- Can't use it all yourself? Share it with your friends and neighbours – we're building green communities!

uses:

- Rake a thin layer over your grass or ground cover for a healthy lawn.
- Spread it around shrubs, trees and perennials.
- Dig it into the soil in your vegetable beds before you plant.
- Make potting soil: one part sifted compost to one part soil and one part pure vermiculate (a kind of mineral clay).
- Compost tea (check Lindsay's website <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/About%5Fus/Lindsay%5Fcoulter/> for a recipe!)



DON'Ts

AVOID ADDING THESE TO YOUR COMPOST:	WHY?
Grease, oils or fats. Bread or bread products Rice Pastas Salad dressings or sauces Dairy products Nuts or nut butters Fish Meat Bones	They attract rodents and other pests, and cause odor problems.
Dog or cat feces, kitty litter, human waste	Meat-eating animals (including humans) may carry diseases, and kitty litter may contain chemicals.
Ash from barbecues or coal	Contains harmful chemicals.
Weeds with mature seeds	When you spread the compost, you'll spread the weeds, too.
Treated wood products	May contain harmful chemicals.

troubleshooting:

SYMPTOM	DIAGNOSIS	TREATMENT
Compost pile is wet and stinky	Too much green material.	Add brown material. Turn pile. Put scraps at the centre of the pile.
Pile is dry	Too much brown material. Not enough water.	Add fresh kitchen scraps. Moisten with water. Cover pile to reduce evaporation.
Pile is cold	Lack of nitrogen.	Add green materials (eg grass clippings, kitchen scraps).
Compost is attracting pests (dogs, rodents, raccoons)	Improper materials added. Insufficient covering.	Use a pest-resistant bin. Avoid adding grease, oils, meats, breads, etc (see checklist above). Cover food scraps with soil or brown material. Put kitchen scraps in the centre of the pile.
Compost is attracting flies	Food scraps are exposed.	Cover green material with browns. Put kitchen scraps in the centre of the pile.

