



## When is My Compost Ready?

It is important that your compost is stable before use. Finished compost will be dark, brown and crumbly with an earthy odor. The materials will be completely decomposed and the finished pile will be significantly smaller than the original volume.

## FAQ

### Q: Why does my compost smell like rotten eggs?

A: There is an insufficient amount of air or too much moisture. Try turning your pile and add brown materials, such as sawdust or leaves.

### Q. Why does my compost smell like ammonia?

A: There is too much nitrogen. Try adding brown materials.

### Q: Why is my pile decomposing slowly?

A: Your pile may be too small, not enough nitrogen, lack of air, or cold weather. Try turning your compost more regularly, adding green materials, insulating with a tarp in cold weather, or breaking materials into smaller pieces.

## Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

Bureau of Land  
1021 North Grand Ave East  
Springfield, IL 62702

Phone: 217-524-3300  
E-mail: [EPA.Recycling@Illinois.gov](mailto:EPA.Recycling@Illinois.gov)

Composting Website: [bit.ly/47ohBrE](https://bit.ly/47ohBrE)



### Additional Resources:

IFSC | Start Composting: [bit.ly/3sWjP2Y](https://bit.ly/3sWjP2Y)

Illinois Extension | Composting: [bit.ly/3MxQLoX](https://bit.ly/3MxQLoX)  
Getting Started with Composting: [bit.ly/3Gwgnin](https://bit.ly/3Gwgnin)

US EPA | Composting At Home: [bit.ly/3MApP7Y](https://bit.ly/3MApP7Y)

USDA | Composting: [bit.ly/469wPzJ](https://bit.ly/469wPzJ)



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# Backyard Composting 101







## What is Composting?

Composting is the decomposition of organic materials. It is Mother Nature's way of feeding the earth. The process transforms raw materials, such as leaves, grass clippings, and food scraps, into a dark, crumbly soil amendment, which is a valuable natural fertilizer that is packed with nutrients.

Gardeners use compost to replenish the soil during and in between growing seasons.

## What About Compostable Plastics?

Typically, these products are composted at industrial type compost facilities. This material should be left out of your compost bin as most of these plastics do not break down in home compost piles.

## Why Compost?

Composting reduces the amount of waste you send to a landfill, improves the soil in your lawn and gardens, promotes healthy plant growth, helps soil retain water, kills weeds, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Composting can save you money by reducing the need to buy fertilizer or bags for landscape waste.

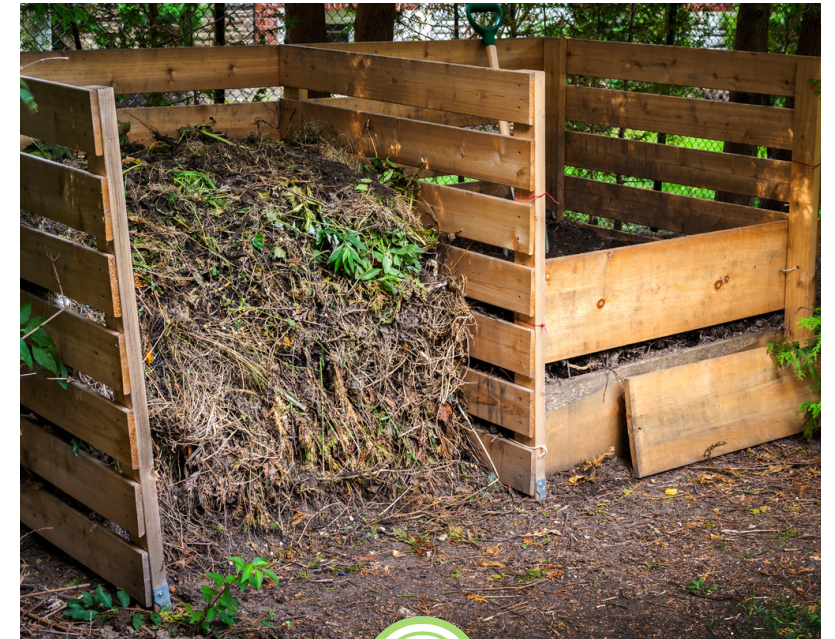
**51.4%** of waste sent to landfills can be composted\*

## How to Compost?

You will need **brown** material to produce carbon, such as dead leaves, sawdust or wood chips, shredded paper, coffee filters, and **green** material to produce nitrogen, such as grass clippings, fruit and vegetable scraps, lint, tea, and coffee grounds.

Select a location for your pile or bin in a dry spot next to a water source and add the brown and green materials in alternate layers. Keep the compost moist and occasionally turn your mixture. It will be ready to use once it is a dark crumbly texture!

\*Source: U.S. EPA,  
Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: 2018 Fact Sheet



## What's In

veggie scraps  
coffee grounds  
dryer lint  
tea bags  
grass clippings  
shredded paper



fruit scraps  
coffee filters  
egg shells  
nut shells  
saw dust  
straw & hay

## What's Out

fats & oils  
treated wood  
diseased plants  
colored paper  
plastics  
compostable plastics



meat  
pet waste  
dairy/cheese  
weeds  
stickers  
bones