

City of Mt. Vernon Environmental Tips

Backyard Composting

Getting Started...

Compost happens naturally, no matter what, but by following these directions you help to accelerate the natural decomposition process to produce healthy soil.

Step 1. Obtain a bin or an area in your yard that is approximately one cubic yard (3'x3'x3'). Size is important for the proper temperature. Piles that are too small cannot hold enough heat for effective microbial activity, and piles too large (more than 5 feet cubed) do not allow for enough air to reach microbes in the center of the pile.

Step 2. Mix two (2) parts brown (dry leaves, small twigs, straw etc.) with one part green (grass clippings, kitchen scraps, etc). This 2:1 ratio provides the best mix of carbon (brown materials) to nitrogen (greens).

Step 3. Chop or break up any twigs and large pieces of fruit and vegetable waste. Materials will break down more quickly with increased surface area.

Step 4. Keep it moist. Water your compost to keep it moist like a wrung out sponge.

Step 5. Keep it turning. Compost needs air. Turning the compost will help it break down and will prevent it from smelling unpleasant.

Step 6. When it is ready your compost should look and smell like rich soil. Use finished compost to feed your garden, flowers, potted plants and lawn.

Note: What you shouldn't compost is bone, meat, eggs (egg shells are okay). Cheese and other dairy products are fine as well as used vegetable oils from cooking, as long as they are done in moderation (small amounts at a time).

For information on how to build your own compost bin or where to obtain a manufactured compost bin, please contact City Hall at 903.537.2252.