

Make Your Own Compost Tumbler Workshop



Save water, money, time and maintenance costs by using yard waste to benefit you and your soil. This workshop will cover the basics of composting and provide instruction to construct various composting systems. By

tumbling this composter around the yard once or twice a week you could have a barrel full of compost by the end of the season. This workshop is taught by River Keepers, Cass County Soil Conservation District and Clay County Soil & Water Conservation District.

When: 6-8:00 p.m. on May 2, 2017, May 15, 2017, and June 1, 2017

Fee: \$69.00 includes supplies (\$64 for Moorhead school district residents).

Cass County residents may be eligible for partial reimbursement of fee; information will be available at the conclusion of the workshop.

Come prepared to carry home an empty 55-gallon drum.

To register: contact Moorhead Community Education at www.moorheadschoools.org/Schools/Alternative-Schools/Community-Education/ or by calling 218-284-3400.

Styles of Composters

Closed style: Enclosed containers for composting include upright box-like containers and rotating drums or tumblers that completely enclose the compost pile.

Advantages:

- Will rarely attract pests.
- Rotating drums are the easiest type of composter to mix or turn.
- Usually easy to unload.

Disadvantages:

- Require water to be added since they don't let in rain.
- Upright containers (not rotating drums) may be very difficult to mix or turn.

Open style: Open bins are very simple and loosely encase the compost pile. They usually do not have a lid. They can be constructed with wood, chicken wire, or recycled plastic.

Advantages:

- Easily collect rain water to speed the composting process.
- Very convenient for adding materials to the compost pile.

Disadvantages:

- Can attract rodents, flies, bees, and bears.
- They can let in TOO much moisture for efficient composting, and they may be more difficult to mix.

What is Compost?

Compost is decomposed organic material, such as leaves, grass clippings, and kitchen waste. It provides many essential nutrients for plant growth and therefore is often used as fertilizer. Compost also improves soil structure so that soil can easily hold the correct amount of moisture and air. Compost improves the texture of both clay soils and sandy soils, making either type rich, moisture-retentive, and loamy.

Benefits:

- Reduction in garbage volume.
- A rich natural fertilizer, cuts back on use of chemical fertilizers.
- Improves soil aeration and drainage.
- Helps control weeds.
- Decreases the need for costly watering
- and many more!



Example of open container

What Can Be Composted?

Key materials are nitrogen-rich 'greens' and carbon-rich 'browns', water, and air.

Examples of greens are green leaves, coffee grounds/filters, tea bags, plant trimming, fruit (including dropped apples) and vegetable scraps, egg shells and fresh grass clippings.

Examples of browns are dead plants, sawdust from untreated lumber, twigs, and dried grasses, weeds, straw and leaves.

Water allows microbes in your compost to grow and help decompose material. The compost should be moist.
Air adds in decomposition and controls odors.

A recipe is 1 part green to 4 part brown.

What not to compost:

- **Meat, fish, and animal fats** - These materials may attract unwanted visitors to your compost pile.
- **Shredded newspapers or office paper** - The paper may contain chemicals that are not good for your compost. Recycle them instead.
- **Ashes from your grill** - Wood ashes can be very useful in small quantities, but BBQ grill ashes should NEVER go into your compost pile.
- **Dog and cat feces** - These materials can add diseases to your compost, and they have an unpleasant odor. Use chicken, horse, cow, and rabbit manure instead.
- **Sawdust from treated lumber** - Sometimes lumber is treated with harmful chemicals.

As soon as decomposition begins, the volume of the pile will decrease. Don't be tempted to

Composting Tips

add more materials at this point, as this resets the clock on that batch.

You will maximize your composting efforts if you aerate by turning or mixing the heap about once a week. A garden or hay fork works well.

Finished compost is usually less than half the volume of the materials you started with, but it's much denser. When finished it should look, feel and smell like rich, dark soil. You should not be able to recognize any of the items you originally placed in the pile.

Common problems:

- If the compost is too wet, turn it more frequently or add dry brown material.
- If the pile doesn't heat up, add more green material to the compost, may need to add water, may need to aerate.
- If there is an ammonia or rotten egg smell, turn the compost or add brown material to dry it out.
- If large amounts of dropped apples or kitchen scraps attract wasps or other unwelcome pests, turn more frequently.

Using finished compost:

- Mix compost into the soil to improve it.
- Spread compost on lawn to fill in low spots.
- Use as mulch for landscaping and gardening.
- Mix compost into pots of potted plants.

Composting: Basic Information, And Make Your Own Workshop



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