



Build Your Own Compost Tumbler



Why a Compost Tumbler? Compost tumblers can be used to speed up the normal process of producing compost. Usually, gardeners who make compost will place their lawn and garden waste in a pile in the corner of the yard or garden and turn it occasionally with a fork or shovel to aerate the pile.



Depending on the rate of turning, rainfall and temperature, the waste can be used as compost at the end of the season. This entire process can be hastened by using a barrel composter which increases the amount of air reaching the compost material. The process is as simple as placing garden/yard waste into the barrel composter and rolling it across your yard at least once a week.

Materials:

- One food grade barrel (preferably 55 gallon): barrels of this type can be purchased at Mac's Hardware in Fargo and Moorhead, on Craigslist and occasionally bakeries. The barrel should have only been used to store food products such as cooking oil. We prefer plastic barrels, but the metal ones can be used.
- 2 hinges with small bolts (not screws) and nuts.

- 2 latches with bolts (not screws) and nuts.
- 3-4 4" bolts with nuts. These are used to flip the yard waste.
- 1 saw to cut the trap door.
- 1 drill and bits to make holes for hinges, latches, flipping bolts and vent holes.
- Screwdrivers
- Wrenches

Keeping with the theme of recycling...use parts that you may have around your house, garage or shop. There is no need to buy new parts for this project. If you need to buy parts, consider shopping at stores such as Habitat ReStore which encourage the recycling of such materials.

Process:

1. Cut a trap door into the side of the barrel.

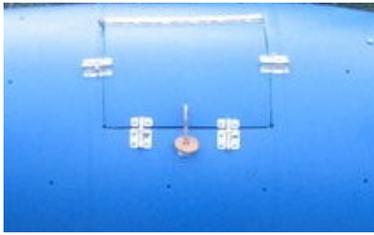
Depending upon the type of barrel, a variety of tools may be used to cut the trap door. If it is a plastic barrel, usually a jig saw or key hole saw is used.

Make an outline of the door on the side of the barrel. Usually the door should be large enough to allow use of a shovel to insert waste.

Drill a hole in each corner of the door outline.

Insert the key hole or jig saw blade into one of the holes and cut out the trap door.

2. Install the 2 hinges on one side of the trap door.



3. Install latches on either side of the trap door.
4. Drill several holes, about 3/4 inch in diameter, on the top and bottom of the barrel for ventilation.
5. Drill 3-5 holes in a line from top to bottom in the side of the barrel opposite the door.
6. Install 3-5 4" bolts into the side of the barrel. Use a nut inside the barrel to hold the bolt in place. These help to flip the yard waste as the barrel is rolled.
7. Some users develop a system to aid in the rolling process. For example: Barrels can be placed on rollers and rolled in place or the barrel can be flipped on a pipe which is inserted through the sides.



Maintenance:

There is little maintenance required for compost systems. Depending on the climate, if there is material left when cold weather arrives the process will slow down considerably, perhaps stop altogether. This is normal. The process will continue once temperatures start to rise in the spring.



For more information:

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