

# Home Composting for Busy People!

## Why Compost?

- Composting helps you recycle your yard waste and food scraps.
- Composting helps Contra Costa County reach state-mandated waste reduction goals.
- Finished compost, or 'humus', is a valuable soil amendment that helps break up hard clay soil, giving it a more crumbly, granular structure. Composting also acts as a fertilizer, placing a variety of nutrients into the soil.

### *Grasscycling*

Known as mulching grass clippings, you simply leave your clippings on the turf where they will quickly decompose to enrich the soil.

### *Mulching*

Use leaves, grass, pine needles, or wood chips as a mulch. It will prevent weed growth, keep moisture in the soil, and protect against erosion.

### *Worm Composting*

A great way to recycle kitchen food scraps. Worm composting is perfect for apartments or condos where little or no yard waste is produced.

### The "Key De-Composers"

Earthworms, springtails, sow bugs, ground beetles, mites and more!

These critters are the key to composting! With help from fungi, they break your waste down into compost. However, most of the work is done by organisms you can't see, primarily air-breathing (aerobic) bacteria. You will know the bacteria are doing their job. Where aerobic bacteria is active, yard waste feels warm (even hot!) and may give off water vapor during the colder months.



## Which Form of Composting Fits Your Schedule?

### Passive

Passive composting is adding yard waste to your bin or pile and doing little to no maintenance. It is very easy to do but will prolong the time to generate compost to six months or longer.

### Active

Active composting is when you actively maintain your system in the "three step method." This will produce compost in three months or less! See reverse side for instructions.

Questions? Call (925) 906-1801 x306 or visit [www.wastediversion.org](http://www.wastediversion.org)



**CENTRAL CONTRA COSTA**  
**SOLID WASTE AUTHORITY**

# Three Step Method

## Step 1.) Gather Your Yard Waste

Yard waste is either fresh and moist, or old and dry. The fresh waste has a higher nitrogen content while the old, dry waste has a higher carbon content. When starting your compost system, it is best to combine both types of waste together to give the air breathing bacteria and other decomposers a “diet” that will encourage their work!

In addition to yard waste, you can also compost food scraps; fruits & vegetables, coffee grounds, tea bags and egg shells. NEVER compost meats, dairy products, or anything that can spoil. Try to grind or cut up materials before adding them to your system - they will break down much faster! Other items to avoid include dog/cat feces and large amounts of paper or ash. Also avoid diseased material or weeds that have flowered and gone to seed!

## Step 2.) Start Your Compost System

Once you have gathered your fresh (Nitrogen-rich) and old (Carbon-rich) waste, you can combine both to build your compost system. Work with whatever you have available. Mix both materials into your bin and add water as you mix. You may also add some finished compost. This adds microscopic decomposers that you want to put to work in your new system.

## Step 3.) Maintaining Your System

Maintaining your compost system is key to faster, more efficient decomposition. That does not mean a lot of work. Follow these simple steps:

- Periodic aeration is key to faster composting. Use a pitchfork to turn your compost once every 10-14 days to produce compost in a 3-6 month period.
- Composting materials should be kept moist like a wrung out sponge. Add water if your system is too dry or add some dry materials if your system is too wet.
- BURY food scraps in the material to mask odors that might attract flies or rodents.
- Continue to add fresh yard waste and food scraps throughout the life of your system. Space is constantly created as materials break down. When you notice that your material looks about 50% broken down, stop adding new material to allow your compost to more completely decompose. Finished compost will look like a dark, dirt-like material. Once your compost is finished it's ready to be used in your garden!

**Good Luck!**

