

# Compost

Nature's gift to the garden!



## Your garden will love you

Compost strengthens plant's immune systems, allows soils to breathe and ensures plants are healthy and vibrant. It also increases the water holding capacity of the soil and fertilises our plants.



## 4 easy steps to great compost

### 1. Choose your site

The ideal location for compost has good drainage, is well shaded in summer, and not too cold in winter.

### 3. Use the layering recipe

Building compost is like making a layer cake. Start with a thick layer (15cm) of twigs or coarse mulch at the base for drainage. Add a thin layer of kitchen organics and green garden organics, then cover with a layer of finished compost or manure. Finish with a layer of brown garden organics. Moisten, then continue building the heap with alternate layers of green and brown organics.

### 2. Know what to compost

Compost is a mix of different materials:

- fresh kitchen or garden organics such as fruit and vegetable peelings, grass clippings, green leaves, weeds and manure, which are rich in nitrogen
- brown garden organics such as dry leaves, woody twigs, paper and straw, which are low in nitrogen
- water – compost needs to be moist
- soil or completed compost to introduce vital micro-organisms

### 4. Maintain your compost

Adding air is vital to keep your compost fresh. Turn compost at least once a week with a garden fork or cork-screw compost turner, or place garden stakes or pipes through the heap to allow air in.

Keep your compost moist but not wet. If compost gets too wet, simply add dry organics and turn it.



### Hints:

Keep a bucket with a well-sealed lid in the kitchen to collect food scraps. Use the lawn mower to chop up coarse garden prunings.



## Why compost?

- Reduce the amount of organic waste sent to landfill in everyday rubbish. Approximately 60% of Australia's 'rubbish' is food waste
- Reduce the potential for landfills to create liquid 'leachate' which can pollute our streams, oceans and underground water
- Reduce the production of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas

## What you can compost

Anything that was once a plant or animal can be composted, including fruit and vegetable peelings, newspaper, grass clippings, weeds, tea leaves, coffee grounds, egg shells, old potting mix, dead flowers, tea bags, human and animal hair, even the vacuum bag contents! Experienced composters can even compost meat and dairy products.

## Compost Q & A

### "Help, I have smelly compost!"

Causes of smelly compost include too much moisture, not enough air, or too much food waste and not enough dry ingredients. Solutions to smelly compost include:

- Mix in dry leaves or garden mulch
- Turn the compost to aerate and let more air in
- Combine food waste with sawdust or shredded newspaper before adding to the heap
- Give your compost heap a 'floor' of twigs to ensure good drainage
- Add garden lime, dolomite or woodfire ash to reduce acidity of the heap and counteract too much food waste

### "I have unwelcome visitors in my compost!"

Ants, cockroaches, mice or rats can sometimes make your compost their home. Solutions include:

- Ensure food in the heap is covered with a layer of green organics – then cover heap with underfelt, hessian or thick cardboard
- Turn the heap regularly to discourage ants and cockroaches
- Place fine wire under the compost bin or heap to keep out mice and rats
- Avoid placing dairy products, meat and seafood in the compost

### "My compost is slow to mature"

A slow composting system can mean that the compost is not hot enough, or there may not be enough air or water. Solutions include:

- Move the compost to a warmer location
- Add nitrogen-rich material, such as kitchen organics or green garden organics to speed up the composting process
- Turn the heap and add water
- Cover the compost with insulating material in winter if it gets too cold



Did you know you can pick up a compost bin at cost price from North Sydney Council!

