

FAQ Backyard Composting

- Is it more environmentally sustainable to compost in your backyard or to participate in the program?

That depends on where you live and whether or not you garden. If you garden you will need compost so the best source will be composting organics from your landscape and kitchen. If you don't garden you don't need compost and so providing a source of biodegradable material for the municipal digester is more sustainable than throwing it away in your garbage and sending it to a landfill.

- Why would I participate in the program if I can just compost in my yard?

If you need compost you should decide what you can make in your yard. If you don't need compost you should send it to the municipal digester.

- Can I compost in my yard through the winter?

Yes. Food waste composting is very easy and there is no problem doing it in the winter. But it does not heat up!

- What are the best things to put in your compost?

I put all of the food waste from my kitchen into my compost along with paper towels and coffee filters. Anything that is or was once food is biodegradable. The only thing I don't put in my food waste bin on the counter is grease because it would be too messy. But I can dump the grease directly on the compost pile outside and not worry. I also crush egg shells and add them to the pile. Food waste is 90% water so my compost bin rarely fills quickly. I also add leaves from my lawn and make a pile next to the food waste bin to add as needed.

- Do I need to regularly turn my compost?

No but it will help things progress into a decent compost. It also helps to add water if it's getting dry.

- How do I keep pests away? Won't I get a bunch of raccoons/squirrels eating my compost?

There are backyard bins for sale that have a lid you can lock.

- What are the best "structures/containers" for composting in your yard?

See handout

- Can I put meat/dairy in my compost?

Small amounts aren't a problem.

- Do I need to put worms in my compost?

No they will find it all on their own. Your bin or container should have an open bottom.

- How long will it take for the compost to be ready to spread on a garden?

About a year but it really depends on how often you turn it, moisture, C/N ratio, size of bulking material. If you want your compost to finish more rapidly you should use turn it once a month (April-Nov), water it weekly (depending on how much water comes with the food waste), and add some soil to the pile (this is all you need for microbes).

- Where can I take my compost if I don't have anywhere to spread it in my yard?

donate to community gardens)

