

The easy compost fix-it guide

As composting is a natural process, it doesn't take much to work out the problem. Some solutions are listed below.



Smelly compost?

If it gets too wet or if there is not enough air in the heap your compost can smell. A common cause is having too much food and not enough dry ingredients in your compost.

Fix it

- ✓ Fork in dry leaves or garden mulch.
- ✓ Add garden lime, dolomite or woodfire ash to the heap to reduce acidity.
- ✓ Turn the compost to add air.



- ✓ Combine nitrogen-rich ingredients with sawdust or shredded newspaper before adding to the heap.
- ✓ Give your compost heap a 'floor' of planks to ensure good drainage.

Unwelcome visitors?

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



Fix it

- ✓ Always cover food with a layer of garden vegetation or soil – then cover heap with underfelt, hessian or polythene plastic sheet.



- ✓ Turn the compost to discourage ants and cockroaches.
- ✓ Fine wire under the compost bin or heap helps keep out mice and rats.
- ✓ Avoid placing dairy products, meat and seafood in the compost.



Compost 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.

Fix it

- ✓ Add nitrogen-rich material, such as kitchen scraps or green garden vegetation.
- ✓ Turn the heap and add water.
- ✓ Cover the compost with insulating material in winter if it gets too cold.



Compost bins and worm farms are available from some local councils.

For more information visit

www.environment.nsw.gov.au
www.livingthing.net.au

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our environment *it's a living thing*

Easy composting

Create your own Eden

Why compost?

Compost is natural and inexpensive and is good for the environment. By turning food scraps and garden vegetation into compost you can:

- **improve** soil quality and garden vitality
- **conserve** water

- **recycle** valuable nutrients and reduce the use of artificial fertilisers
- **prevent** greenhouse gas emissions and landfill impacts from wasted food and garden vegetation.



Did you know?

- About half of what we throw into the garbage bin is food and garden vegetation.
- These materials can be used to make compost to benefit your garden.



4 easy steps to great compost

1 Choose the site



Look for a site with good drainage and summer shade.

2 Compost ingredients

You will need:

- nitrogen rich kitchen scraps such as fruit and vegetable peelings and green garden vegetation such as fresh grass clippings, green leaves, weeds and manure
- carbon-rich brown garden vegetation such as dry leaves, woody twigs, paper and straw
- some water
- some soil or completed compost to introduce composting micro-organisms.

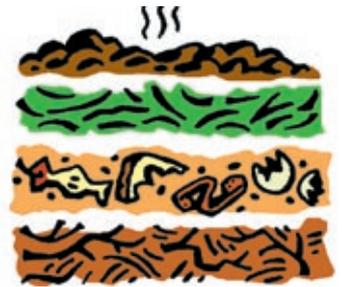


Hints

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

3 Create layers

To make compost, start with a thick layer (15cm) of twigs or coarse mulch at the base for drainage. Then follow the A,B,C steps and repeat to build a heap layer upon layer.



- A.** Thin layer of kitchen scraps and green garden vegetation
- B.** Cover with a layer of brown garden vegetation covering all kitchen scraps
- C.** Moisten well

Then repeat steps ABC to build a heap layer upon layer.

Hint Sprinkling soil or finished compost on top of food scraps will make a richer compost and help reduce odours.

4 Maintaining your compost

Add air to the compost so it doesn't smell by turning it with a garden fork weekly or by placing garden stakes or pipes through the heap to allow air in.

Hint Cover your heap so that it is just moist, not wet. If it is wet or saturated mix more dry brown material through it and turn.

Compost problems? Turn over for the Easy Compost Fix-it Guide >>

How to use compost

Use compost as:

- seed-raising mix
- fertiliser
- mulch (apply up to twice a year on natives).



What you can compost

Fruit and vegetable peelings, newspapers, grass clippings, weeds, tea leaves, coffee grounds, egg shells, old potting mix, dead flowers, human and animal hair.

Hint Avoid placing meat or dairy products in your compost until you are confident and experienced in making compost.

