



Composting 101

Fast or Rapid Method

The fast method is recommended if there is a large supply of all the needed organic materials. This method requires more time for chopping and shredding materials and more frequent checking and turning of the pile. In this method, composting conditions are closely watched and controlled to guarantee ideal conditions at all times. Compost can be made by this method in less than one month.

Building the Pile

1. Follow steps 1 through 6 for the standard method. Chop or shred all coarse or woody materials. Pay close attention to making the proper mix and adding the correct amount of water. Be sure enough nitrogen is available. The pile will quickly begin to heat up.
2. After three days turn and mix the pile just as the standard method. Check for proper moisture and adjust if needed.
3. Turn and mix the pile every three days. Check and adjust the moisture at each turning. Temperatures should be very high, 130 to 160°F may be observed. These temperatures are high enough to kill most weed seeds, insect eggs and disease organisms, but some composting microbes also may be killed. The pile should be checked for overheating with a composting thermometer. If the temperature goes much above 140°F, cool the pile by turning and mixing.
4. After two weeks, the temperature will drop as the composting process slows. The compost will be dark brown and crumbly with an earthy smell. Some larger pieces of woody organic material may still be present. Large pieces may be sifted out and returned to the composter for the next batch. Allow finished compost to age for two weeks before using around plants.

Households requiring high volume of compost and having a lot of material available may find the fast method will meet their gardening needs. Both green and brown materials may be available from

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neighbors, farms or supermarkets.