

Improving your garden with composting

Composting is one of the simplest and most environmentally friendly ways homeowners can improve their gardens while reducing household waste. By turning everyday organic materials into nutrient-rich soil, composting helps plants grow stronger and healthier while keeping food scraps and yard waste out of landfills.

At its core, composting is a natural process. Microorganisms break down organic matter such as fruit peels, vegetable scraps, leaves, and grass clippings into a dark, crumbly material often called “black gold” by gardeners. This finished compost is packed with nutrients that improve soil structure, help plants retain moisture, and encourage healthy root growth.

Many homeowners assume composting is complicated, but it can be surprisingly simple. A basic compost pile can be created in a corner of the yard using materials that would otherwise be thrown away. Compost bins are also available and help keep the process tidy and contained.

Successful composting relies on balancing two types of materials often referred to as “greens” and “browns.” Green materials include items

like fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, fresh grass clippings, and other nitrogen-rich materials. Browns include dry leaves, straw, shredded paper, cardboard, and small twigs. Combining these materials helps create the right conditions for microorganisms to break down the organic matter efficiently.

Air and moisture are also important for healthy compost. Turning the compost pile occasionally with a shovel or pitchfork introduces oxygen, which speeds up the decomposition process. The pile should remain slightly damp—similar to the feel of a wrung-out sponge—but not overly wet. Too much water can slow the process and create unpleasant odors.

Certain items should be avoided in a compost pile. Meat, dairy products, oily foods, and pet waste can attract pests and produce strong smells as they decompose. Instead, compost piles should focus on plant-based materials and natural yard waste.

One of the biggest benefits of composting is its impact on garden soil. Compost improves soil structure by helping sandy soils retain water and allowing heavy clay soils to drain better. It



also adds valuable nutrients that support plant growth without the need for as many chemical fertilizers.

Composting also plays a role in environmental conservation. Food scraps and yard waste make up a significant portion of household trash. When these materials are sent to landfills, they decompose without oxygen and can produce methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. Composting allows these materials to break down naturally while returning nutrients back to the soil.

With just a little effort, composting allows homeowners to transform kitchen scraps and yard waste into a valuable resource that benefits both the garden and the environment.



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