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How to Build a Compost in Your Backyard

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The **benefits of composting** are numerous – it helps fight climate change, upcycles food and organic waste, saves landfill space, creates nutritious amendment material for gardens and landscapes, and encourages the biological diversity in your backyard. At Hearts, we recognize that biodegradable materials are compostable materials. This is so important to us that we've incorporated as many raw materials into our sustainable fashion as possible – many of which you could compost along with your food scraps!

The great news is that home composting is not hard. This simple guide on how to **compost in your backyard** will get you pointed in the right direction.

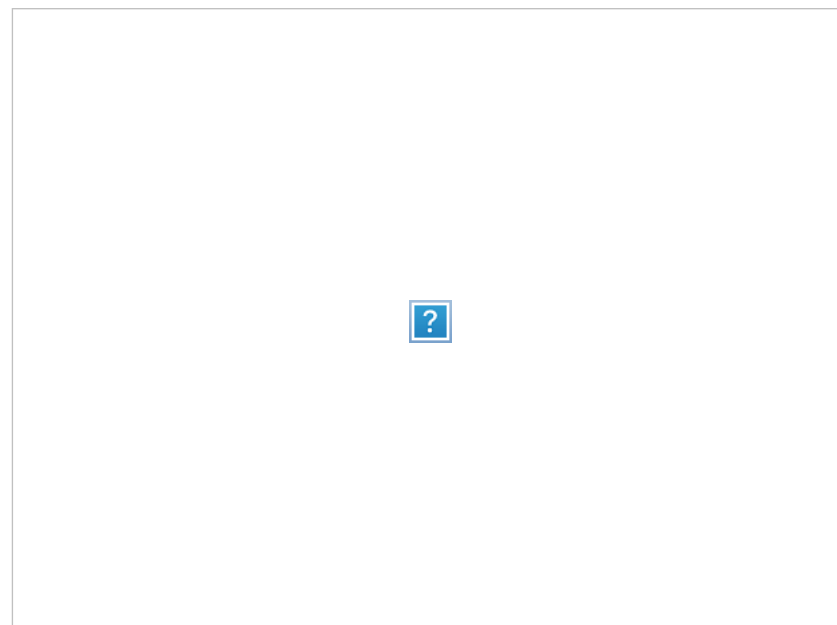
Quick Guide: Why Composting is Important

- **Climate change and food waste:** 33 million tons of landfill trash is wasted because of food waste.^[i] And when organics like kitchen scraps break down in an oxygenless landfill environment, they generate methane gas, which is 21 times more potent than carbon dioxide in terms of trapping heat in our atmosphere. Composting all US food scraps will shrink our collective carbon footprint by 21%.^[ii]

- **Resource saving:** Food scraps aren't trash, they're resources! When you compost, you're keeping the soon-to-become nutrients and humus out of landfills and upcycling them into rich, biologically alive compost that will nourish your soil and so much more.^[iii]

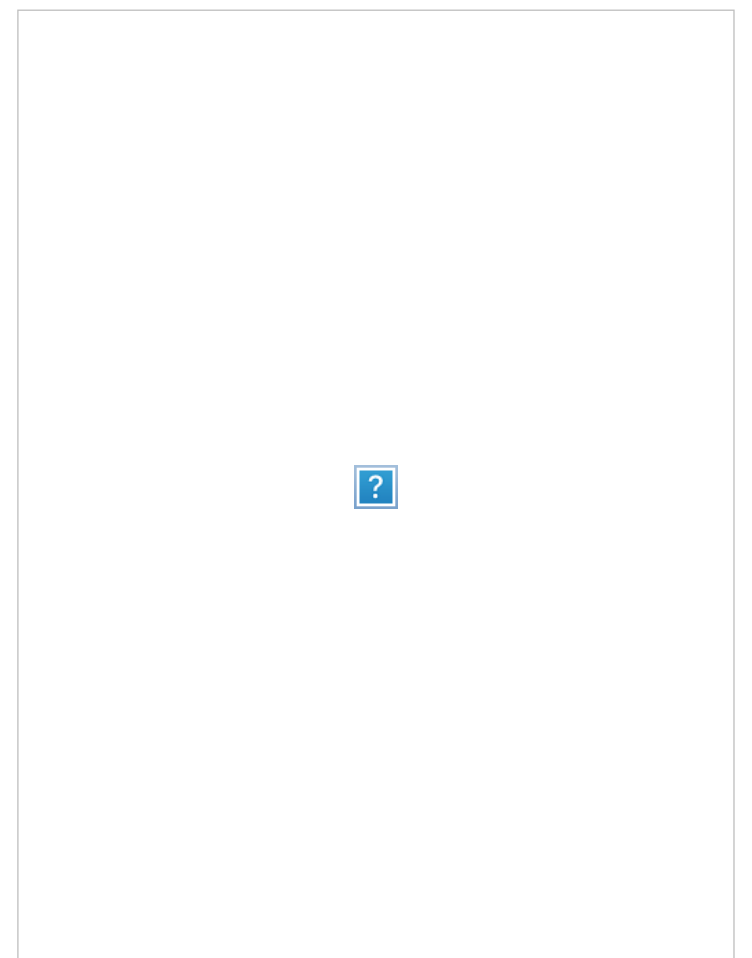
- **Local, natural fertilizer:** Whether you've got a vegetable garden or just grow flowers in your front beds, making your compost and then using it to enrich your landscape is the best thing you can do to provide locally-made nutrients. Not only is compost a replacement for expensive pesticides, fertilizers, and mulch, it's much less toxic. Composting is therefore healthy for your family and your pets.^[iv]

Take Action! How to Compost at Home



(sometimes calls hot composting) will stimulate the natural biological activity of bacteria and microorganisms, producing compost relatively quickly. The unturned method is less work but requires a lot more time to produce finished compost.

1. **Decide between a bin or a pile:** First you'll need to determine whether or not you're going to contain your compost in a bin or box of some sort. If not, you can create a simple pile of compost. [Dummies.com](#) has a simple guide to making a low-maintenance pile of compost which you'd just locate in a convenient area of your backyard.
2. **Get DIY compost bin making instructions:** If you want to contain your compost rather than just freely pile it in a corner, you can either buy a compost bin or make one of your own. Find detailed guides on how to build a compost bin via the [US EPA](#) or [Eartheasy.com](#).
3. **Choose your compost approach:** There are many systems for composting depending on the space and tools you have available, but the two basic approaches to outdoor composting are: turned and unturned. Turning your compost (sometimes calls hot composting) will stimulate the natural biological activity of bacteria and microorganisms, producing compost relatively quickly. The unturned method is less work but requires a lot more time to produce finished compost.
4. **Avoid putting these things in your compost:** Some materials are just not appropriate for the compost bin, either because they'll attract pests or because they'll contaminate the compost so that it's unusable on the vegetable garden. As such, you should avoid dairy products, diseased plants, insect-infested plants, grease, lard, oil, fat, meat, fish, poultry, pet wastes, and chemically-treated yard trimmings.
5. **Load up your compost with these additions:** Plenty of organics can be added to your compost pile, including kitchen scraps, grass clippings, sawdust, newspaper, tea bags, wool, organic yard trimmings, cardboard, paper, eggshells, ashes, fruits and vegetables, and more. You may even find you can compost unusual things like hair and fur, dryer lint, and cotton.
6. **Balance carbon and nitrogen:** Sometimes referred to as the browns and the greens of composting, the ratio of carbon (C) and nitrogen (N) nutrients added to your compost bin has a bit impact on how successful you'll be. This [Composting101.com Guide](#) will help you get it right without pulling your hair out.
7. **Advocate for community composting:** Check out this [map of regional and state composting programs](#) to see if there's one in your community. If not, tell your elected officials that you want a program for composting in your community so that neighborhood landscaping and food waste gets upcycled appropriately.



Dig Deeper: How to Build a Compost

- A very simple guide on backyard composting is available from the [US Environmental Protection Agency](#).
- Discover every aspect of home composting via the University of Florida's [The Compost that Happens Full Tutorial](#).
- The Cornell Waste Management Institute has an extensive list of free [backyard composting resources](#).
- Get a clearer picture about composting and climate change through the US EPA's [Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions through Recycling and Composting](#) report.
- Get detailed lists of what you should and should not compost via [Eartheasy.com](#)

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