

WHERE'S THE GOLD?

Composting is relatively easy but sometimes things do go wrong. If you are having troubling acquiring black gold, maybe one of these solutions can help you.

- The pile is damp and has a sweet smell, but it doesn't seem to be heating up. Your compost pile may need a shot of nitrogen. Try adding some grass clippings, table scraps, even a sprinkling of organic fertilizer may give it the shot it needs to start heating up.
- The centre of the pile is damp and warm, but the outside edges are cold. The problem may be that your pile is too small. Keep your composter as full as possible. If your neighbour doesn't compost, ask them for their scraps. Remember to mix old and new matter, wet with dry, and to turn the pile often breaking up any clumps.
- If your compost develops a "stinky" odour, it is probably too wet and compacted and not getting enough air. Loosen up the pile by turning it, break up any compacted clumps, and open the air vents at the bottom of

the composter. You can try adding some small twigs, which will create air pockets within the pile.

- Your compost pile does not seem to generate any heat and is not decreasing in size. It may be that the compost pile is too dry. Add some water, but just enough to make it feel like a wrung-out sponge. If the pile is too wet and muddy, lift the lid of the composter for a couple of days to dry out the pile or spread the compost out on a tarp in the sun. You can also try adding more dry material.

For More Information, Contact:

The Composting Council of Canada
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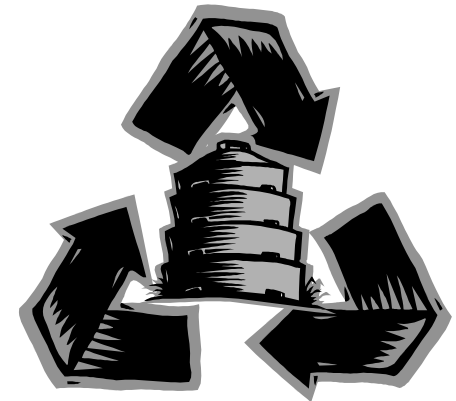


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BACKYARD COMPOSTING:



BLACK GOLD



Muskoka
WATERSHED COUNCIL

*With Special Assistance By
Kathy Wood, Master Gardener*

BACKYARD COMPOSTING

Compost is a necessary amendment to the soil, adding precious nutrients, moderating soil temperature, breaking up clay soils, and improving soil aeration, while at the same time adding structure and moisture retaining capacity to sandy soils.

But the benefits of composting are not to soil alone. Your plants will be healthier and more disease resistant and most important, composting reduces the amount of refuse that would be wasted by filling ever-dwindling space at local landfill sites. Composting can actually reduce the amount of household garbage by one-third.

Composting at home can be easily accomplished with a commercial composter bin available at most hardware stores and local garden centres, or if you are handy, by building one yourself. Place your composter in a sunny location with good drainage. You'll want to use your composter year-round, so make sure it is accessible and convenient.

1. Till the soil in the spot where you are going to place your composter to aid drainage. Now place the composter, making sure the access door, if there is one, is accessible.
2. Place a layer of small twigs or branches at the bottom of the composter to allow for drainage and good air flow.
3. Now you are ready to start composting. It's easy – simply alternate thin layers of kitchen scraps (vegetable peelings, crushed egg shells, fruit scraps, tea bags, coffee grounds with paper filters and shredded newspaper and paper towel), dry yard waste (grass clipping, healthy plant material from your garden, autumn leaves - chopped) and some soil (old potting soil). You can also add hair, wood ash from your fireplace, dryer lint and wool and pure-cotton fabrics (cut in small pieces). Remember that the composting process works quickest when the organic pieces are small. Trimmings and leaves should be shredded.



4. **DO NOT INCLUDE:** Meat, fish, fats and oils, pet waste, dairy products, plastics and metals. These products will attract animals

to your compost pile.

5. Moisten the vegetative matter in your composter regularly – it should be the consistency of a wrung-out sponge. If the composter is too wet, it will begin to smell, too dry and the contents will take too long to compost.
6. Aerate the compost by turning or mixing the contents on a regular basis every couple of weeks or each time you add something new to the bin. The combination of air, moisture and microorganisms help the vegetative matter to decay quickly and turn into black gold for your garden. This process could take 2 months or longer, depending on the materials used and if you are faithful at turning the compost. Your compost is ready when it is dark in colour, crumbly in texture and has an earthy smell. You can sift the compost to trap larger particles that have not yet composted and return them to the bin.

