



plants grow kids

SCIENCE FACT SHEET

## Composting

Composting is the most efficient way to recycle organic wastes such as food scraps and garden clippings.

### What is compost?

Compost is the by product of microorganisms and soil animals such as earth worms who use the organic matter for food and leave behind compost which is high in nutrients and great for reconditioning soils.

### How to make compost:

When making compost you can use a ready made compost bin, or can make your own compost pile in the corner of the yard or in a small fenced off area or with chicken wire.

- 1) Place all the organic kitchen and garden waste into the pile. If it is too dry add some straw or grass clippings that have been soaked in water to the compost pile.
- 2) Over 3-5 days the compost pile should heat up in the middle to about 35-60 degrees Celsius. You should turn the compost over with a shovel or fork every 5-7 days to keep it aerated.
- 3) The pile should become smaller than its original height, this is a good sign. It means the organic material is being broken down and you are making compost.
- 4) If you turn the compost pile every 5-7 days to aerate it should be ready to put on the garden in about 4 to 6 weeks. If you do not turn the compost pile regularly it will take between 6 to 9 months to decompose.
- 5) The best compost should be dark in colour and look like large pieces of soil.

### The best results in composting are achieved by the following:

- 1) Ensure a good mix of food scraps and garden waste
- 2) Make sure the compost pile is aerated to give the microorganisms and soil animals air to breath.
- 3) Make sure the compost pile is moist; microorganisms and worms need water. However not too much or they will drown.
- 4) Make sure the pieces of material in the compost pile are not too big, the smaller the better to speed up the decomposition process.
- 5) Your compost bin or pile should not be too big, you need to make sure the composting material is piled up rather than spread out. This will ensure you get enough air to the middle of the pile.

About 20-30% of our household waste is food scraps and garden clippings. Composting helps create wonderful, healthy gardens to play in and significantly reduces landfill, which in turn will be of great benefit to our environment.

### There are some organic products that you should not put in your compost pile:

Pet droppings, meat, dairy products, weeds, and treated timbers such as sleepers.