



## YARD TRIMMING DROP-OFF SITE

Community Recycling & Resource Recovery, Inc.

11201 Randall Street, Sun Valley, CA 91352

Open Saturday & Sunday (Except Holidays)

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Residential yard trimmings only.

*(City of Los Angeles residents only. Please bring your California drivers license and your current DWP billing statement.)*

Call (213) 485-2260 to find out when the next FREE composting workshop is scheduled, or visit our website at: [www.cityofla.org/san](http://www.cityofla.org/san)



City of Los Angeles  
Department of Public Works  
Bureau of Sanitation  
Solid Resources Citywide Recycling Division  
1149 S. Broadway, 10th Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90015-2213



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City of Los Angeles  
Department of Public Works • Bureau of Sanitation



# YOUR GUIDE TO Home Composting

Save the Planet in Your Own Backyard!

Solid Resources Citywide  
Recycling Division

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle,  
and Buy Recycled



"Don't just stand there; recycle something!"

-Recycle Robot

Composting is nature's way of recycling. It's an easy way to transform your yard trimmings, fruit scraps, and vegetable peels into humus-rich, sweet-smelling soil conditioner.

## HOME-MADE COMPOST

- Helps your garden by improving the texture, fertility and water holding capacity of your soil. Healthy soil grows healthy plants.
- Helps you save money by replacing store-bought soil conditioners with a natural, home-made product.
- Helps the environment by recycling valuable organic resources.
- Helps the City save money by lowering curbside collection costs.



## WHAT CAN YOU COMPOST?

A healthy pile needs a variety of ingredients that contain carbon (brown materials) and nitrogen (green materials). A well balanced diet will create a friendly environment for nature's tiny composters (worms, bacteria, fungi, etc.).

It is easy to create a healthy pile when you follow the do's and don'ts listed below:

### DO COMPOST:

#### GREENS

- Vegetable trimmings
- Coffee grounds
- Fruit peels
- Egg shells
- Tea bags
- Yard clippings
- Livestock manure
- Fresh hay



#### BROWNS

- Chopped cornstalks
- Shredded paper
- Paper towels
- Shredded cardboard
- Dried leaves
- Wood chips
- Sawdust
- Straw



### DON'T COMPOST:

- Meat
- Fatty food
- Bones
- Dog or cat feces
- Diseased plants
- Treated wood



### CHOOSE A LOCATION

Composting can be done indoors or outdoors. Worm composting is best done indoors, and backyard composting is best done outdoors.

## CHOOSE A METHOD

There are different ways to set up a composting pile. Use the description below to choose a method for outdoor composting that best fits your lifestyle.

### SLOW & COLD COMPOSTING

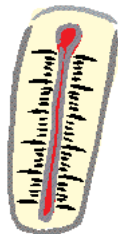
This method requires little to no mixing and can be done in a pile or bin. Start by mixing together equal amounts of green and brown material by placing the mixture in a pile or bin. Add new ingredients as they become available. The compost will be ready in about 4 to 6 months.



or

### FAST & HOT COMPOSTING

The ideal size of a hot compost pile is 1 cubic yard (3 feet x 3 feet x 3 feet). Equal amounts of green and brown materials are mixed together and placed in a pile or bin. Turn the pile and add water about once a week to provide good air circulation and moisture. The pile will get hot (up to 140°F) which will speed up the composting process. Compost may be ready in 4 to 6 weeks. Do not add new material to the pile. Save it for your next compost pile.



Whichever method you choose, you'll always get better results if you:

**Choose a composting location** that gets equal amount of sunlight and shade during the day.

This keeps the compost from drying out too fast.



**Chop or shred your ingredients**

before putting them in the pile. Smaller pieces help speed up the decomposition process. A shovel, shredder, or lawnmower are useful choppers for your yard clippings



**Try to mix equal parts** of greens and browns into your pile, and mix as many different types of greens and browns as possible. Nature likes a balanced variety.



**Add water** when you build your pile, and maintain the moisture level as damp as a wrung-out sponge.



Choose a bin or pile style based on your ingredients, pile location, cost and compost method.

### OPEN PILE

Simply mix the material together, and keep it in a dense heap, no smaller than 1 cubic yard. If you have problems keeping the pile moist, try covering it partway with a tarp. An open pile is not recommended if your ingredients include kitchen scraps.



### BINS

You can make the bin yourself or purchase one.

#### Homemade Bin

Convert an old plastic trash can into a composter by drilling about four rows of holes 4 to 6 inches apart all around the sides. Cut the base for drainage;

or

Make a wire mesh bin by using 12 feet by 3 feet galvanized chicken wire or hardware cloth;

or

Build a wooden bin with 4 used wood pallets.

#### Store Bought

These bins are available at most garden centers and home improvement stores. Store bought bins differ in price, ease of mixing, size, shape, etc.

Call 1 (213) 485-2260 to learn more about the City of Los Angeles' Discounted Compost Bin Sales Events.



Your compost is ready when it is dark brown in color, feels crumbly like soil, and it no longer heats up and has a pleasant earthy aroma. Before using your compost, break up any large clumps, and put any material that is not fully composted back into your new compost pile.

Here are some easy ways to use compost:

### AS MULCH

Spread a layer of compost 1-3 inches thick around plants and over bare soil to prevent soil erosion, conserve water and control weed growth.



### AS SOIL CONDITIONER


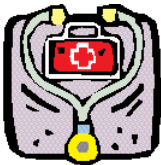

Mix about 6 inches of compost into the soil each time you start a new flower or vegetable garden or plant new trees or shrubs.



### AS POTTING MIX

Sift the compost through a 1/4 inch screen for use as planting mix. For indoor potted plants, mix together 2 parts of compost, 1 part sand and 1 part vermiculite.



 SYMPTOMS	 CAUSES	 SOLUTIONS
Pile not composting	Too dry	Moisten, until slightly damp
	Too much woody material	Turn the pile and add fresh green material
Pile smells rotten – attracts flies	Too wet	Turn the pile and add dry material
	Non-compostable items present	Remove meat, fatty foods, etc. and turn the pile
	Too much green material	Turn the pile and add dry woody material
Rodents in pile	Food waste in open bin. Holes too large	Turn compost and rodent-proof your bin

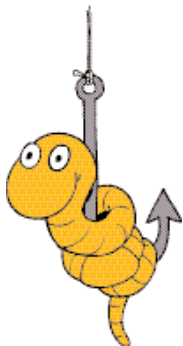
Kids love worm composting. It's an easy and fun way to compost kitchen scrap (remember, no meat or fatty foods). You'll get small amounts of excellent fertilizer from your bin.

### CREATING A WORM HOME

You will need a plastic or wood container with a snug fitting lid and holes in the bottom for drainage. A large box (1 foot deep x 2 feet long x 3 feet wide) can handle about six pounds of food scraps per week. A small box (8 inches deep x 2 feet long x 2 feet wide) can handle about three pounds of food scraps per week. Place the box where it will not freeze or overheat — in a kitchen corner, garage or patio.

Complete your worm home by filling your box about 3/4 full with bedding material. Worms like to be cool and moist, so make your bedding material out of a mixture of shredded black and white newspaper, leaves, moist straw and a bit of soil.





### FINDING THE RIGHT WORMS

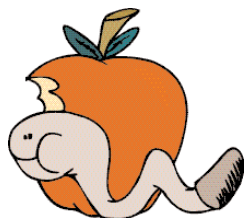
The best worms to use are “red worms,” sometimes called “African Reds,” “Red Wigglers” or “Manure Worms.” You can purchase them at a bait shop or find them in an old compost pile. The common brown garden worm cannot survive in temperatures above 90°F, so don’t put them in your worm bin.

Start with 1/2 to 1 pound or two big handfuls of worms. They will eat their weight in food each day and double their numbers every 30 to 45 days. Place your red worms on top of the bedding. They will burrow down into it.

### THE FIRST MEAL

Red worms love kitchen scrap, like fruit and vegetable peels, eggshells, tea leaves and coffee grounds. Worms do not like dairy products or oily and woody food.

Gently mix about one quart (1 pound) of kitchen scraps into the worm bedding. Cover and leave the worms alone for a couple of weeks while they get used to their new home.



### MAINTAINING A GOOD HOME AND HAPPY WORMS

Maintain a 4 to 6 inch layer of fresh bedding in your bin by adding fresh bedding every 1 to 3 months. Make sure the bedding is moist, like a wrung-out sponge. Plastic bins may need extra bedding to absorb excess moisture. Wooden bins may need extra water to maintain moisture.

Observe the amount of food being eaten by the worms. Adjust the amount as needed. They will probably need to be fed about one quart (one pound) of food scraps per square foot of bin area every week.

Be sure to bury the food to avoid fruit flies and odors. Bury the food in a different corner of the box at each feeding. The next time you look, the food should be gone. If not, try feeding your worms a little less for a while.

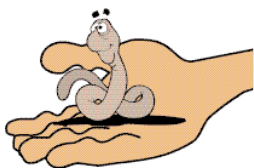


### HARVESTING

Finished compost material will settle to the bottom as worms turn the food scrap into a rich natural fertilizer (worm castings). When the original bedding has been transformed into compost, it's harvest time. Stop feeding your worms. In a few days, you can either:

Move the worms and castings to one side of the box, and add fresh bedding to the empty side. Place food on top and cover with some fresh bedding to prevent fruit flies. Within a few weeks, the worms will move over to the new bedding and food. At that point, you can harvest the castings from the worm-free side. Replace the empty space with fresh bedding and new food.

or



Separate the worms from the compost by hand, and start anew with fresh bedding and food.

Worm castings are richer in nutrients than yard trimmings compost and should be used more sparingly. Worm castings are rich in nitrogen, calcium, iron, magnesium, sulphur and 60 other trace minerals. They are best used as part of a planting mix or a slow release fertilizer. Here are some simple applications:



### GERMINATING SEEDS

When germinating seeds, place some castings in the bottom part of the soil.




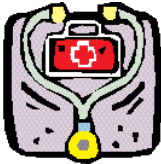

### TRANSPLANTING SEEDLINGS

At transplanting time, put a small handful of castings into each hole as you plant.

### POTTING PLANTS

Mix a small amount of castings into your potting soil. The worm castings should be no more than one-fifth of all the ingredients in your potting mix.



 SYMPTOMS	 CAUSES	 SOLUTIONS
Worm bin smells bad	Too much food	Feed less
	Too wet	Check drainage holes and add dry bedding
Fruit flies	Food is not buried	Bury food
		Cover surface of bedding with sheets of newspaper
Worms aren't eating	Too much food	Feed less
	Too acidic	Stop feeding citrus peels
		Sprinkle crushed oyster shells

REFERENCE BOOKS

Let It Rot!  
 1975, Stu Campbell  
 Storey Publishing, Pownal, VT  
 152 pp.

Rodale Guide to Composting  
 1979, Organic Gardening Staff  
 Rodale Press, Emmaus, PA  
 405 pp.

Backyard Composting  
 1992, Harmonious Technologies  
 Harmonious Press, Ojai, CA  
 96 pp.

Worms Eat My Garbage  
 1982, Mary Appelhof  
 Flower Press, Kalamazoo, MI  
 100 pp.

WEBSITES

City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works  
[www.lacity.org/san](http://www.lacity.org/san)

Los Angeles Department of Water & Power  
 Free Home Shade Trees  
[www.ladwp.com/trees](http://www.ladwp.com/trees) or Call 1-800-GREENLA

Million Trees LA  
[www.milliontreesla.org](http://www.milliontreesla.org)

County of Los Angeles  
[www.smartgardening.com](http://www.smartgardening.com)

Gardening For Kids  
[www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/Glade/3313/](http://www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/Glade/3313/)

Worm Composting  
[www.yucky.com/worm](http://www.yucky.com/worm)

Garden Web: The Internet's Gardening Community  
[www.gardenweb.com](http://www.gardenweb.com)