

# How to Build a Compost Pile & Increase Soil Fertility

## 1. LAY A FOUNDATION

Logs, sticks, and branches



Place woody materials at the base to allow the pile to "breathe" in oxygen and aerate out CO<sub>2</sub>.

## 2. ADD NITROGEN

Food scraps, manure, green leaves, grass



"GREENS" contain moisture and nitrogen, which is a valuable nutrient that plants cannot make themselves.

## 3. ADD CARBON

Dried leaves, wood chips, straw, sawdust



"BROWNS" are dry and have carbon, which allows the soil to retain water, its structure, and fertility.

## 4. ADD MICROBES

Beneficial bacteria, fungi, protozoa, nematodes, amoebas



Adding prepared compost allows the existing microorganisms to inoculate a new pile.

## 5. WATER

Moisture



Watering as you are layering allows the compost pile to retain moisture from the core, helping facilitate the decomposition process.

## 6. REPEAT LAYERING

15:1 Carbon to Nitrogen



As you continue to build your compost pile, ensure that that you are adding enough carbon and that it stays moist.

### WHY COMPOST?

- DIVERT WASTE FROM LANDFILLS
- INCREASE NUTRIENT UPTAKE OF PLANTS
- IMPROVE SOIL HEALTH TO CONTROL PESTS AND DISEASE
- FEEDING SOIL = FEEDING PEOPLE

### WHEN IS IT READY?

- LOOKS LIKE DARK, CRUMBLY TOPSOIL
  - SMELLS EARTHY
  - ORIGINAL MATERIALS ARE NOT RECOGNIZABLE
- TIP: TURNING THE PILE WILL SPEED UP THE PROCESS