

Summary Guide to Backyard Composters

DO:

- Find level ground for your composter to sit that has access to sunlight (if possible)
- Layer your compost with 'browns' and 'greens'.
- Turn your compost weekly when able to.
- Ensure compost is moist and not saturated or too dry. Simple test is to squeeze in your hand, it should be moist enough to stick together, but not drip excess moisture.

DON'T:

- Place your composter on uneven ground.
- Place Compostable or Biodegradable materials in your compost. They will decrease efficiency of the backyard composter.
- Leave your compost to itself – maintenance is the key to success!
- Skip the lid – Lids on backyard composters are critical to avoid pests.

WANT MORE INFO?

Please visit the City of Yellowknife's Backyard Composting Page found under the Compost tab in the Living Here section.

If you have any specific questions that are not answered in this guide or on our website page, please email our Sustainability team at sustainability@yellowknife.ca

Thank you for doing your part to keep waste out of the Landfill!



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A Guide to Backyard Composting



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Backyard Composting FAQ

Backyard composting is a rewarding way to divert your organic waste from the landfill and into your garden.

Where can I get a backyard composter?

You can buy a ready-made bin from the Solid Waste Facility or you can construct your own. The bin should be approximately 1 cubic metre in size and have a lid.

Where should I put the backyard composter?

Choose an area that is easy to reach, level and is exposed to sunshine. Remember, you'll want to reach the composter in the Winter!



How do I properly use a backyard composter?

The important thing to remember when using a backyard composter is the process of layering of brown and green compost, beginning with a layer of brown waste at the bottom of the composter.

Here is a breakdown of material to use and to avoid in your backyard composter:

Greens (Nitrogen Rich)	Browns (Carbon Rich)	Avoid including these materials in a backyard compost...
Vegetable / fruit peels & scraps Coffee grounds, tea bags Green grass clippings Green garden waste Flowers	Dried leaves & brown grass clippings Pine and spruce needles Paper, cardboard and newspaper House plants Prunings & cuttings (these help create air pockets) Sawdust from untreated wood	Meat, fish and bones attract animals Dairy products in large quantities make the compost smell bad Fat, oil and grease in large quantities slow down the process Feces (kitty litter, dog doo, humanure) contain pathogens Weed with seeds or persistent roots Diseased plants Ash or sawdust from chemically treated or painted wood
Other (Add Minerals)	Straw	
Egg shells Wood & wood pellet ash (sparingly)		

What is the maintenance required?

In order to turn this organic waste into compost, air must be mixed through the pile. Air is added by stirring the compost weekly.



Moisture levels also need to be monitored. Your compost should look like a wrung out sponge, should be moist but not saturated or dry. If your compost is saturated, you can add 'browns' and turn the pile, if it is dry can add water or 'greens'.

What about winter maintenance?

In the Winter, you should insulate your compost bin with straw or foam. Ensure snow is not entering the composter to avoid saturated compost in the Spring.



How do I avoid unpleasant odours?

You can simply add more 'browns' and turn your pile to reduce odour. Reducing the amount of meat and dairy will also help control the smells.



How do I limit pests?

Ensure lid comes to a close and adding a layer of browns on top of layers of 'greens'. Meat and fish bones attract pests; try to avoid putting them in your composter.

How do I know if my Compost is finished?

The compost will be moist and dark, with a strong earthy smell. Be patient – it usually takes two rounds of Summer before compost in Yellowknife is finished.



What can I use the finished compost for?

Compost is a great soil conditioner and would be an excellent addition to your garden or houseplants.

