

Backyard Composting in Yellowknife

What is composting?

Composting is a natural process that breaks organic kitchen and yard wastes into a dark, earthy, soil-like material called compost.

Compost is an excellent soil amendment that helps gardens and lawns grow and acts as a slow-release fertilizer!



Why compost?

- **Reduce waste:** 40% of household garbage in Yellowknife is made up of organics that can be composted.
- **Make your garden & lawn healthy:** Compost provides an excellent soil conditioner that improves plant, garden and lawn growth - and it's free!

What can I compost?

Composting is like cooking - it helps to add ingredients in the right proportions! In backyard composting, the goal is to add roughly equal proportions of 'greens' (materials that are high in nitrogen) and 'browns' (materials that are high in carbon).

Greens (Nitrogen Rich)

Vegetable / fruit peels & scraps
Coffee grounds, tea bags
Green grass clippings
Green garden waste
Flowers

Other (Add Minerals)

Egg shells
Wood & wood pellet ash (sparingly)

Browns (Carbon Rich)

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
Straw



Avoid adding to your backyard compost...

- ⊘ 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

How to set up a backyard compost

1. Choose a convenient, level, well-drained and sunny area in your yard for your compost. Make sure you can easily reach your compost bin during the winter.
2. Make a compost bin or buy a ready-made bin and set it up. The bin should be approximately 1 cubic metre in size. A lid or cover helps keep ravens and animals out.
3. Put down a layer of 'browns' such as dry leaves or shredded paper in the bottom of your composter.
4. Add a layer of 'greens' such as kitchen scraps and yard trimmings.
5. Keep adding greens and browns in roughly equal proportions, in alternating layers.



Using the finished compost

Compost is finished and ready to use once it looks dark, crumbly, moist and has an earthy smell. In Yellowknife it usually takes two summer seasons to make finished compost.



You can harvest your finished compost in the spring or fall by shovelling it out of your compost bin. It is then ready to use!

- Work a few inches of compost into the top layer of your garden soil - compost is a great soil conditioner!
- Add compost around the base of shrubs and trees and to houseplants.

Questions? Want to learn more?

City of Yellowknife www.yellowknife.ca

Ecology North www.ecologynorth.ca (867) 873-6019

- composting brochures, workshops, red wiggler worms

City Farmer www.cityfarmer.org

Composting Council of Canada www.compost.org

This sheet is available on-line at www.yellowknife.ca

Compost maintenance

Spring, Summer & Fall

- Keep your pile moist - like a wrung-out sponge. Water the compost if it gets too dry and add dry leaves or paper if it gets too wet.
- Add air to the pile every week or so by stirring or turning.
- Mix the compost well in the spring after it thaws with a shovel or garden fork.

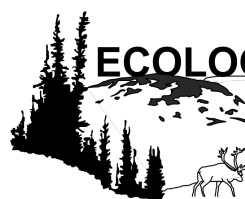


Winter (Compost pile is frozen)

- Keep adding organics.
- Cover your compost to keep out the snow so it's not too wet in spring.
- Insulate the compost with straw or styrofoam.
- You may need an extra compost bin to accommodate organics through the winter.

What should I do if...?

- Compost has an unpleasant odour
 - > Add more brown materials
 - > Turn the pile to add air
 - > Cover fresh green materials with dry leaves or paper
- Compost is too wet
 - > Add more brown materials
 - > Turn the pile to add air
- Compost is too dry
 - > Add water and/or fresh green materials
 - > Add fewer brown materials
- Compost pile is attracting pests
 - > Cover fresh food waste with browns
 - > Avoid adding meat, fish or dairy products.



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