

Recipe for Healthy Soil ~ Make a Batch of Compost

If you don't have all the ingredients, you may have some neighbors that would be willing to contribute items for your compost recipe. Hint: stockpile leaves in the fall for year-round addition to your compost pile.



Ingredients for compost:

- 1 Large wheelbarrow full of brown stuff (fallen leaves, paper, straw, etc.)
- 1 Large wheelbarrow full of green stuff (grass, yard trimmings, fruit and vegetable kitchen scraps etc.)
- 1 Shovel or pitch fork and a garden hose

Layer:

Layer 4-inch layers of green and brown materials alternately, as if you are making lasagna. As you layer, moisten the materials slightly so entire pile feels like a wrung out sponge.

Size:

For best results your pile should reach three feet high by three feet wide in all directions or approximately one cubic yard.

Cooking:

Your pile will heat up as microbes and fungi get to work decomposing your pile. The highest temperatures (130° to 160°F) may be reached in 3

to 5 days. Use a pitchfork to turn your pile once a week. This will introduce oxygen and new food to keep the microbes that make your compost healthy and multiplying. Continue turning occasionally for two to six months.

Serve:

When it's done cooking, the brown leaves and green grass clippings will be un-recognizable; they'll look and smell like rich forest soil. Add finished compost to garden, lawn or flower beds. Compost feeds your soil by increasing organic matter, which increases nutrient retention. It also helps the soil to hold water.

Enjoy:

The benefits of home composting are many - you prevent waste and save precious landfill space, you save money on disposal, and you keep your home environment healthier with a natural alternative to petrochemical fertilizers.

How can I learn more about backyard composting?

The Clark County Master Composter/Recycler program at Columbia Springs offers free composting advice, and yard debris and food waste composting workshops. Composting Demonstration Sites are open to the public during daylight hours at two locations: Columbia Springs 12602 SE Evergreen Hwy., Vancouver, and at the west end of the Wildlife Botanical gardens at CASEE, 11104 NE 149th St., Brush Prairie. For details on class dates and times, visit www.columbiasprings.org/mcr or call the Master Composter/Recycler office at (360) 882-0936 ext. 224 or email mcr@columbiasprings.org.

If you don't have the space or inclination to whip up a batch of homemade compost, consider subscribing to Yard Debris Service from Waste Connections. The yard debris picked up by this service is taken to a commercial composter for processing. Call **360.892.5370** or visit www.wcnorthwest.com for more information.

See the Brown Pages for additional information: If you received a Clark County Qwest Dex phone book, then you have a wealth of [recycling](#), [yard debris](#) and [garbage information](#) at your fingertips. Check out the Brown Pages, (right behind the green Community pages in the front of the book) and you will find the answers to your solid waste questions. You can get up to date information at the local WCI website, www.wcnorthwest.com.