

# Composting Food Scraps at Home



or•gan•ics



Rwaste  
Rescue  
Reduction  
food Composting  
scraps



# Food Waste

- 30-40% of food is wasted each year
- Equals about \$1,600 each year per family
- ~13% of carbon pollution emissions are related to the growing, manufacturing, transporting, & disposal of food





# Vermont Universal Recycling Law

- Implements a ban on disposal of food scraps by 2020
- Residents who compost at home are not required to compost meat & bones
  - ✓ Can continue to be disposed in trash

# Food Waste Reduction

## *Tips*

- Adjust food preparation & portion sizes
- Monitor food expiration dates
- Plan meals & make a shopping list
- Check refrigerator & cupboards prior to shopping!





# Organics Recycling = Composting

- Controlled, aerobic (requiring oxygen) biological process
- Results in the decomposition of organic materials
- Occurs naturally
- Microorganisms (bacteria, fungi, other organisms)
  - ✓ Digest organic residues for food and energy
  - ✓ Speed up the decomposition process
- Primary end-products—carbon dioxide\*, water, & compost
  - ✓ \*Off-set by not putting food scraps in the landfill & by using compost to grow plants (carbon sequestration)

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BENEFITS



REDUCTIONS IN  
DISPOSAL NEEDS



REDUCED GREENHOUSE  
GAS EMISSIONS



HEALTHIER SOIL &  
PLANTS

# Basic Home Composting Recipe

Combine organic materials in proper ratios

- **2-3 Parts Carbon - “Brown” materials**

- Woody, dry materials- leaves, soiled paper, shredded paper, wood shavings, straw
- Bulky materials, including branches should be chopped or shredded

- **1 Part Nitrogen - “Green” materials**

- Green, wet materials, such as kitchen scraps, grass clippings, garden trimmings (no weeds), manures

- **Keep it small!**

- Mowing, grinding, chipping, or shredding



# Recipe, cont.



Minimum of 3 x 3 x 3



- Containers or piles
- Cover

# Soil Saver Bin



## Recipe, cont.

- **A little soil or finished compost**
- **Moisture**
  - Just a little, like a damp sponge
  - Leave lid or cover off during rain
  - ✓ Required to keep compost microorganisms alive & active

## Recipe, cont.

- **Air/Aeration**

- ✓ Turn or aerate materials

- ✓ Or, place materials on perforated pipes



# Other Needs

- Shovel or Pitch Fork
- Or, bobcat/tractor
- Covered area for storage of leaves/carbon
- Thermometer
  - ✓ For hot composting

And, You! Of course!



# Simple & “Slow” Method

- Follow the basic recipe
- Turn occasionally
- Compost will be ready in 12-18 months



# Active (“Hot” Compost) Method

- Enclosed containers
  - Insulate in winter
  - And/or use larger containers/covered piles
- Proper “mix” of green & brown ingredients
- More frequent turning of materials
  - 1-2 times per week
- Temperature should rise to 120° F
- Finished compost in 6-8 months

# Compost Bacteria & Temperature

- Mesophilic
  - Active at lower temperatures
- Thermophilic
  - They're hot! Active above 120° F
  - ✓ Necessary for more rapid composting





# Acceptable Materials

- ✓ Vegetable food scraps, peels
- ✓ Fruit food scraps, peels
- ✓ Nuts & nut shells
- ✓ Dairy, cheese
- ✓ Coffee grounds/filters & tea bags
- ✓ Leaves, garden trimmings
- ✓ Napkins, paper towels
- ✓ Shredded paper
- ✓ Sawdust





# DO NOT COMPOST

- Meat/Bones/Grease
- Weeds
  - Tomatoes & squash may sprout “volunteers”
- Cat litter or dog manure

*\*\* Small amounts of meat & grease, e.g., in soups, casseroles, sauces should be fine. Eggs & egg shells are fine.*





# Food Scrap Composting Tips

- Have an adequate amount of carbon
- **Always** cover food scraps with carbon & soil
- Cover with lime or sawdust to deter fruit flies & vermin (rodents, bears)
- Line bottoms of compost bins with wire mesh
  - To detour vermin
- Use vinegar to wash kitchen collection container



# If Critters Become an Issue

- Strictly follow the “composting food scraps” tips & eliminate any meat/dairy
- Discontinue adding food scraps, especially in early spring
- Build an enclosure around the bin

Questions?





# Compost Use - Lawns

- **New Lawns**

- Apply 2.5 cm - 5 cm (1" - 2") of compost and rototill to a depth of 13 cm (5") before you sod or seed your lawn

- **Seeded Lawns**

- For seeded lawns, apply the seeds and a slight dusting of compost to cover.

- Once you have laid the sod or seeded your lawn, water thoroughly



# Compost Use - Flower Beds

## ▪ Existing Beds

- Add about 2.5 cm (1") of compost and work into the soil using a rake, hoe or rototiller
- Water until the entire root zone is saturated

## ▪ New Beds

- Add 2.5 cm - 5 cm (1" - 2") of compost and rototill or mix to at least a 13 cm (5") depth
- Plant and water the flowers

# Compost Use – Produce Gardens

- Apply about 2.5 cm (1") of compost and rototill to a depth of 13 cm (5")
- If your soil is poor quality, you might need to compost yearly until the soil improves
- Be careful not to apply too much compost as many vegetables won't grow in abundance if there's too much nitrogen in the soil

# Topdressing

- Aerate the entire area before topdressing using an aerator.
  - Breaks the soil's surface by poking holes into the earth and bringing oxygen to the soil
- Spread 3 mm - 1.25 cm (1/8"-1/2") of compost evenly over the area using a rake, then water the area thoroughly
  - Watering helps the compost move through the soil's surface