

# WHAT TO COMPOST

## GREENS: fresh, moist, nitrogen-rich materials

### FROM YOUR GARDEN

- green plants and garden trimmings
- fresh leaves and flowers
- grass clippings (or recycle by leaving on the lawn)

### FROM YOUR KITCHEN/HOME

- fruit and vegetable scraps
- coffee grounds and tea bags
- manure and bedding from animals that **ONLY** eat plants

## BROWNS: dead, dry, carbon-rich materials

### FROM YOUR GARDEN

- fall leaves, small twigs, and woody prunings
- dry plant material
- straw and hay
- pine needles
- potting soil

### FROM YOUR KITCHEN/HOME

- bread and grains
- egg shells
- nutshells
- corncobs
- food-soiled paper towels and napkins
- shredded newspaper
- sawdust and wood shavings (from untreated wood)
- stale beans, flour, and spices
- wood ashes

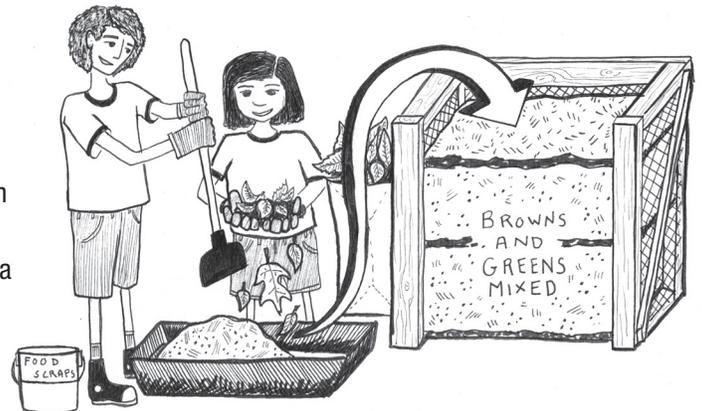


## HOW TO MAKE COMPOST

Mix roughly equal parts (by volume) of high-nitrogen “GREENS” and high-carbon “BROWNS.” Without enough greens, a pile will decompose slowly; without enough browns, the pile may develop an unpleasant odor. In general, it’s better to err on the side of too many browns.

Chop up bulkier materials. To avoid odors or pests, bury food scraps under a layer of browns.

Two other ingredients—water and oxygen—are needed to ensure that your compost pile transforms into a mound of black gold.



## MATERIALS TO AVOID

### FROM YOUR GARDEN

- pesticide-treated plants or pesticide-treated grass clippings
- diseased or pest-infested plants
- poison ivy
- invasive weeds
- weeds with seeds
- large branches (call 311 to schedule a special removal)
- non-compostable materials such as sand or construction debris

### FROM YOUR KITCHEN/HOME

- meat or fish scraps
- cheese or dairy products
- fats, grease, or oil
- cat or dog feces; kitty litter
- colored or glossy paper
- sawdust made from pressure-treated plywood or lumber
- coal or charcoal ashes
- non-compostable materials such as plastics, metals, or glass

The NYC Compost Project, created by the NYC Department of Sanitation in 1993, works to rebuild NYC’s soils by providing New Yorkers with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities they need to produce and use compost locally.  
**Learn more at [nyc.gov/compostproject](http://nyc.gov/compostproject).**

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# COMPOST TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

SYMPTOM	PROBLEM	SOLUTION
<b>Rotten-egg odor</b>	Excess moisture and not enough air (anaerobic conditions).	Turn pile frequently; add more browns such as autumn leaves, woodchips, or newspaper. Make sure bin has drainage; leave lid off to allow more air to flow.
<b>Ammonia odor</b>	Too many greens (nitrogen-rich material such as food scraps and grass clippings); excess moisture.	Add brown, carbon-rich material (such as autumn leaves, woodchips, shredded newspaper, straw).
<b>Slow decomposition</b>	Lack of moisture.	Add water while turning pile.
	Lack of air.	Turn pile; add aeration tubes.
	Lack of nitrogen; too much brown, carbon-rich material.	Add more greens (nitrogen-rich material).
<b>Low pile temperature</b> <i>(If you have a small pile, or if it is very cold out, don't be concerned if your compost is not generating heat; decomposition is still occurring, but at a slower pace.)</i>	Pile too small.	Increase pile size (space permitting).
	Insufficient moisture.	Add water while turning pile.
	Poor aeration.	Turn pile; add aeration tubes.
	Lack of nitrogen.	Add more greens (nitrogen-rich material), such as food scraps or grass clippings.
	Cold weather.	Increase pile size, or insulate pile with straw or other material.
<b>High pile temperature</b> (over 140°F, 60°C)	Pile too large.	Reduce pile size.
	Insufficient ventilation.	Turn pile.
<b>Unwanted pests</b>	Wrong materials in the pile.	Avoid meat, dairy, and fatty foods.
	Food scraps are exposed.	Make sure food scraps are covered with a layer of browns.
	Bin isn't rodent-resistant.	Make bins more rodent resistant by adding hardware cloth to areas where animals could get through. Add a screening barrier vertically 6 to 8 inches into the ground; keep pile moist; turn pile more often to increase temperature and disturb nesting.