Composting Basics

Fuel: What to Compost

**Greens** (high in nitrogen)
- grass clippings
- prunings
- fruits and vegetables
- houseplants
- manure: e.g., cow, horse, pig, chicken or rabbit
- kitchen scraps: e.g., stale bread, egg shells, coffee grounds, tea bags, fruit and vegetable peels

**Browns** (high in carbon)
- leaves
- bark
- straw
- woodchips
- sawdust
- newspaper (shredded)
- brush (chopped)
- corn stalks

**DO NOT USE**
- bones
- dog/cat feces
- oil
- grease
- fat
- wood ash
- meat/fish scraps
- dairy products
- **weed seeds**
- **diseased plants**

Organisms: Compost Workforce

**Microbes**
- Bacteria
- Fungi
- Protozoa
- Nematodes
- Rotifers

**Shredders**
- Worms
- Insects
- Springtails
- Other arthropods

Water: The Squeeze Test

Take a handful of compost material and squeeze it as tightly as you can.
- If you cannot get one drop of moisture to squeeze out, it is too dry.
- If you get more than one or two drops, it is too wet.
- If you get one or two drops, it is the appropriate moisture level.

Air: Keep it Aerobic

- Turning your compost adds oxygen for the beneficial microbes and speeds up the composting.
- Structures should expose the compost to as much air (ventilation) as possible.
- If it stinks (anaerobic) turn it and/or add dry, brown material
Final Product: Finished Compost

- Smells pleasant – like the soil on the forest floor
- Looks dark and crumbly with no recognizable starting materials
- Is moist but not wet

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

U.S. Composting Council Fact Sheet
The best composting information I have found is at:
http://organiclifestyles.tamu.edu/compost/home_composting_faq.pdf
Please check it out to get complete directions and tips on home composting.

Other Good Sites:
http://www.urbanharvest.org
http://www.carolinacompost.com/backyardcomposting
http://www.natureswayresources.com
http://www.thegroundup.com
and, of course, http://www.BuchanansPlants.com