

BUCHANAN'S

NATIVE PLANTS

Composting in a Tumbler

Composting in a tumbler is easier and faster than building traditional compost piles. Just add compostable material as available and turn the tumbler regularly. The following tips will help you speed up the process and get the best compost possible.

Starting out

Use some commercial compost such as The Ground Up brand Vegan Compost as the base for your mix. It will provide a broad spectrum of beneficial microbes to get everything working.

Add compostable materials (see below) as they become available. Traditional composting requires a ratio of 1 part greens to 3 parts browns. However the ratio is not as important with a tumbler. Just be sure to include some greens and some browns. If you have a lot of coarse materials, chop or shred them into smaller pieces. Smaller pieces decay faster.

Compost Materials

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 (filters too), tea
bags, citrus rinds, 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

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Moisture

Usually, the materials you add to your tumbler will have the correct amount of moisture for composting. However, if the contents are too wet, the compost may start to smell bad. If this happens, add some dry material such as shredded newspaper. Tumbling more often will also help eliminate odors. If the material is too dry, composting will slow down or stop. Just add water in small amounts until it passes 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.

Tumbling

Turn the tumbler a few times each time you add materials and be sure to tumble it at least a few times each week.

Finishing Up

Once the tumbler becomes too heavy to turn easily, stop adding new materials. The compost needs to sit for a few weeks or more to finish breaking down. This can be done in the tumbler or you can pile it on the ground and start a new batch in the tumbler immediately. Finished compost should look dark and crumbly with no recognizable starting materials. It should also smell pleasant – like the soil on the forest floor.