



# BACKYARD COMPOSTING

With the  
 **FreeGarden™ EARTH**





## Introduction

Backyard composting with the FreeGarden™ EARTH is easy and rewarding. Composting requires remarkably little effort considering the many benefits it provides for the environment and your community in addition to your lawns, gardens, and houseplants.

Compost enriches soil by conditioning it to foster healthy plant growth. Similar to peat moss, compost helps soil retain oxygen, nutrients, and natural antibiotics to help plants resist disease. Compost also helps soil retain water, which conserves water by reducing the need for excess watering. By amending soil with all-natural compost, homeowners can enjoy fertilizer-free and chemical-free lawns and gardens.

Composting is also a significant component of municipal waste reduction. About half of collected household refuse is compostable organic material. Sending organic waste to landfill squanders its many potential benefits and contributes to environmental problems like water table contamination and greenhouse gasses. Backyard composting combined with recycling, curbside organic recycling, and yard waste collection programs results in up to 85% less 'garbage' collected, transported, processed and sent to landfill. So composting doesn't just help save the planet, it helps save your tax dollars too!

## Quick Start

### **PLACE** your FreeGarden™ EARTH

Choose a convenient location with good drainage. For optimal results you can first turn the soil under the compost bin and put down a wire, mesh or porous base if you wish. Secure the bin with the supplied pegs. Always close the lid and rotate to the lock position when not adding materials or maintaining the pile.

### **ADD** material

Put an initial 4-to-6 inch base of dead plants, twigs or branches in the bottom of the bin. Add material in layers of 'greens' and 'browns'. Add a layer of chopped 'green' kitchen and garden organics, then cover with dry 'brown' organics like leaves, twigs or shredded paper. For optimal results, add more browns than greens, and soil or finished compost can be sprinkled on top. Food residuals should be completely covered. Add enough moisture so the pile is about as wet as a wrung-out sponge. Don't add meats, fish, oils, fats, or pet waste.

**MIX** occasionally (every 1-2 weeks) by turning the pile with a compost turner, pitchfork or shovel to aerate. (Don't mix freshly added layers.) Check moisture regularly; add water if it's too dry, or browns if it's too wet.

**CONTINUE** adding new materials in layers on top. Within the first week, you should notice the pile is warm and may have a slightly sweet, pleasant smell – your compost is “cooking”!

### **HARVEST**

Remove finished compost as needed after 8-12 weeks through the lower harvest door for use on gardens, lawns, trees, shrubs and houseplants.



## Placement and Installation

The best location for your FreeGarden™ EARTH is the one that's most convenient to your kitchen and available for year-round access. A maintained compost bin has a mild and pleasant aroma, so there's no reason to place your bin far from the house. Composting works in all weather, so a short trip out to the pile in the rain or snow is certainly more enjoyable than a long one.

For an ideal installation, remove any sod and turn the soil at the chosen location for drainage and to encourage microbes and worms to help with your composting. Chicken wire or a mesh-screen can be used as a base to discourage occasional pests.

Attach the front harvest door and top lid. Secure the bin to the ground with the supplied pegs.

An initial layer of small branches can be placed at the bottom of the bin for ideal air circulation if desired.



## Adding Material

The composting process needs a mix of 'green' (nitrogen-rich) and 'brown' (carbon-rich) organic materials plus air and water. The FreeGarden™ EARTH is well-ventilated for air circulation. In ideal conditions, all you need to add is organic materials from your kitchen and yard, and sometimes a little moisture as necessary.

### From the House

Keep a pail or container handy in the kitchen to collect plate scrapings, fruit and vegetable peelings, and spoiled foods. A composting specific container like the FreeGarden™ kitchen is ideal, because it seals in odors, is easy to clean, durable, and easy to open and close. Its size also encourages emptying at ideal intervals.

The kitchen container can be lined with recycled newspaper or paper towel to help make it quick and easy to empty and clean. (Small amounts of paper like this are fine to go in your FreeGarden™ EARTH.)

**IMPORTANT:** Chop materials into small pieces so they will compost more efficiently.

### From the Yard

Many gardeners like to keep bags of leaves or piles of yard scraps drying nearby for use as 'browns' or carbons in their compost bin. Materials should be added in 'green' and 'brown' layers. Kitchen 'greens' are always in abundant supply, but it takes a little planning to keep a ready supply of dry browns on hand. Don't forget to keep enough browns around for use through the winter months!

Covering food residuals with 'browns' helps keep odors and fruit flies away. This can be dry yard materials, soil, or finished compost.



#### GREENS

Fruit and vegetable peels, cores and scraps; coffee grounds and tea bags; pasta, rice, grains; egg shells



#### GREENS

Flowers & unused vegetables; plant & hedge trimmings; small amounts of grass



#### BROWNS

Paper towels, napkins, tissues, coffee filters; stale breads; human & pet hair



#### BROWNS

Dried leaves, hay, straw; twigs & chipped wood; most dried weeds and small amounts of dried grass



Bones, meat, fish & seafood; dairy products; fats & oils; pet waste; coal or treated wood ash; large, unchopped materials



Excessive grass; weeds that have gone to seed; diseased plants and leaves; damaging weeds like crabgrass; charcoal

# RECYCLE!

Harvested rainwater is ideal to  
moisten your compost pile.

If you don't already have a rain barrel,  
visit [www.enviroworld.net](http://www.enviroworld.net)  
and discover the  
FreeGarden™ RAIN.

## Moisten

Add rainwater, old coffee, or other non-dairy/non-oil liquid to keep the pile moist, but not too wet – the pile's ideal moisture is like a wrung-out sponge. If the pile gets too wet, simply add more browns and mix. If too dry, add moisture and cover.

## Mix and Maintain

Compost needs air. Every 2-3 weeks, before adding new material, mix the pile with a compost turner (like the FreeGarden™ FORK), pitchfork, or other garden tool. Garden stakes, pipes, or even simple holes poked with a broom handle can also help allow air into the pile. An unmixed pile will compost very slowly and may create an unpleasant smell.

Compost needs water. Keep the pile about as moist as a well-wrung sponge. Don't forget to try to recycle and use harvested rainwater or leftover (non-dairy!) beverages.

## Harvest and Usage

After 8 to 12 weeks, slide up the harvest door and remove finished compost as needed. Finished compost is dark brown and has a rich earthy smell. New materials can be continually added to the top of the FreeGarden™ EARTH (year-round) as the finished compost settles to the bottom for harvesting.

Finished compost can be used in many ways. High in nutrients, it can be applied as desired to gardens, houseplants, hedges, and bushes.

You may wish to screen or sift your compost through wire mesh. The woody leftovers or uncomposted materials can be used as mulch or composted again.

Sifted compost can be used as potting mix and for starting seeds and plants. Sifted compost is also an excellent top dressing for lawns.

Mulching around trees is an excellent use of finished compost. It's most effective to mulch under the tree's drip line, not right next to the trunk.





## Troubleshooting

Backyard composting is usually simple and problem-free, though there can be the occasional glitch. Here are some common problems and simple resolutions.

### Bad Smell

- not enough air
- too wet
- too many greens
- too much food waste

Mix in dry browns. Turn the compost to add air. Add some untreated wood ashes, sawdust, or shredded newspaper. If drainage is a problem, building a plank floor can help. If it smells like rotten eggs, turn the pile for several consecutive days until the smell is gone, and top the pile with soil or finished compost.

### Pests and Insects

- food residuals exposed
- bin unprotected

Ensure the lid is closed and locked after adding and mixing materials. Always completely cover food residuals with a layer of browns, soil, or finished compost. Be careful fats, oils, meats, seafood and dairy are excluded. A fine wire mesh under the compost bin will discourage vermin if necessary.

### Slow Composting

- not enough greens
- not enough air
- not enough moisture

Add more greens, mix thoroughly, and ensure the pile is moist.

## Companion Products

Congratulations on your responsible and rewarding decision to compost! Enviro World offers several companion products that help make composting easy, simple, and enjoyable.

### FreeGarden™ KITCHEN

Having an attractive and easy-to-use food waste container handy is key to successful composting. The FreeGarden™ KITCHEN is an ideal in-kitchen food waste container. Easy to open and close with one hand, right-sized, accommodates plates for scraping, easy to clean, durable, attractive and affordable.

### FreeGarden FORK

Frequent turning is critical to distribute air and moisture throughout the compost pile. The best tool for the job is a dedicated compost turner. The FreeGarden™ FORK is an efficient and easy-to-use two-handled compost turner. Simply plunge it into the pile and lift; the propeller-like blades fold out and stir the pile.

### FreeGarden RAIN®

The right moisture balance is important to successful composting. But why waste fresh tap water on your compost pile when you can harvest rainwater? The FreeGarden™ RAIN is an affordable, attractive rain barrel that's easy to install, stable, fits flush into corner locations and has a raised spout that accommodates many watering cans.

### FreeGarden TEMP

An active compost pile creates heat. A thermometer helps ensure your FreeGarden™ EARTH is working at its best. The ideal temperature range of a backyard compost pile is 135-160°F. The FreeGarden™ TEMP thermometer has a long stem to accurately measure the center of the compost pile and a large, easy to read Fahrenheit dial.



phone 1.905.792.1133 • Visit [www.EnviroWorld.com](http://www.EnviroWorld.com) for more information on FreeGarden™ products.

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