

# Composting “101”

## Why Compost?

Compost builds soil. Central Texas has primarily clay soil, which drains slowly and does not contain very much organic matter, making it difficult to grow landscape plants and trees. Compost loosens the soil to improve aeration and drainage. Additionally, it’s a great activity for the family to participate in and enables increased awareness of the amount of food and yard waste that can add value to your garden.

## How Long Does It Take?

It depends! In warmer weather, the composting cycle shortens due to the higher temperatures. This is also when it’s important to check the moisture level and add water when necessary. The rule of thumb is - the smaller your input, the quicker the compost cycle. If you cut-up your greens and browns to the length of your finger or less, the process is sped up. With some reduction of size of your input, warmer temperatures, and turning at least once a week, expect a compost ready in less than 2 months. During the winter months, expect a longer cycle closer to 4 to 8 months.

Compost Recipe for Central Texas	
Greens	40-50%
Browns	50-60%
Water	Just enough to keep slightly moist, NOT wet
Turn	1-2 times per week
Cook	Allow mixture to reach minimum 130F for 3 consecutive days to reduce pathogens and seed pods



*Compost is ‘ready’ when dark brown, has an earthy smell, and original material is no longer recognizable.*



## What are BROWNS?

- ✓ Any landscape trimmings that have browned/died
- ✓ Fallen leaves
- ✓ Pine needles, straw, hay
- ✓ Shredded paper (newspaper, black/white print)

### Don’t use:

- Slick paper
- String or staples

## What are GREENS?

- ✓ Any non-fat, non-meat or dairy item
- ✓ Vegetable or Fruit scraps
- ✓ Egg shells rinsed so no yolks or white present
- ✓ Fruit and vegetable skins/peelings
- ✓ Yard/landscape trimmings that are still green
- ✓ Coffee & Tea grounds with filter

Don't use:

- Egg yolks or whites
- Dairy of any kind
- Processed foods
- Meat



*Common vegetable table scraps become 'greens' for composting*

## Diagnosing Composting Issues

Odor?	Add more Browns to offset decaying Greens
Not hot or not progressing?	Invigorate with new Greens or moisture
Too wet or insects present?	Add more Browns

## Additional References:

<https://travis-tx.tamu.edu/compostingandsoils>

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/composting>

<https://earthkind.tamu.edu>



*Tumbling Composter with two area, one to add materials and one to allow to 'cook'*

Information compiled by Yvonne Schneider, Travis County Master Gardener.



Daphne Richards, County Extension Agent-Horticulture  
 Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Travis County  
 1600-B Smith Rd., Austin, TX 78721  
 512.710.7098     travismg@ag.tamu.edu  
<https://travis-tx.tamu.edu/horticulture/>



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