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Make your life, and garden, greener with these 7 easy steps. Where do your table scraps go when you throw them out? The picture isn’t pretty. A study by the Environmental Protection Agency found that 21% of all municipal solid waste was food scraps—something to the tune of 63 million tons per year. That’s a lot of banana peels.Here’s the good news: there’s an easy and effective solution that not only reduces landfill waste, but lowers your carbon footprint and supercharges your flower or vegetable gardens as well—it’s composting. Even better, you don’t have to be an expert, own a lot of land, or drive a modified vegetable-oil running hippie van to do it. Everyone, no matter their space or time limitations, can engage in composing. Yes, even you! Composing is nothing more than putting a bit of intentionality behind nature’s process of recycling organic matter—food scraps, leaves, lawn clippings—into a nutrient-rich fertilizer. Bacteria and microorganisms do all the hard (and unseen) work and you reap the benefits—what’s not to like? Got the food scraps, but not sure where to begin? This beginners guide to composting will have you on your way to becoming a composting legend in 7 easy steps. 1. Research your compost options Before you start saving your fruit peelings, or pull that long-neglected bag of broccoli out of the back of the fridge, it’s helpful to do a bit of research and decide how you want to compost. There are a few options: Join a city-wide program. For people living in larger urban centers, this can be the easy button. Many cities have robust composting programs looking to help divert their food wastes from local landfills. The specifics vary wildly, from pick-up at your curb, to drop-off locations at farmer’s markets, but each one looks to leverage the power of people together to make a difference. Be sure to check to see if your city offers something similar. If they don’t, an alternative is to reach out to community gardens, or local farmers, to see if they have a program (or could use your food scraps). Bulk composting outside. If you live in a home with a yard, doing outside composting just might be the answer for you. You can choose between hot composting (putting all your scraps into a self-contained rotating bin) or cold composting (dumping scraps into an open-air pile). Hot composting moves quicker, as the heat trapped inside the bin helps to expedite the process, but requires a touch more work. Cold composting might move slower, but you don’t have to do much of anything but wait. Micro-composting inside. For those with limited space, composting can even be done inside, with limited mess and smells. There are a plethora of indoor composting bins, but the two major options are aerobic composting (similar to the hot composting method above) and vermicomposting (composting with the help of worms). Both methods involve self-contained systems (don’t worry, no worms are going to escape), so the major factor may be space: vermicomposting bins are usually larger, while many aerobic composters can be fit into a pantry or under the sink. Again, you get to choose your adventure. If you decide to compost inside, try pairing with a Febreze PLUG to get ahead of odors (or a Febreze Small Spaces if you’re tucking the compost bin under the sink.) The reality of compost is that there are smells involved, and Febreze can help get ahead of that by actually cleaning away odors. 2. Choose (or make) your compost bin Now comes the fun part: choosing your composting bin. This choice is dependent upon the type of composting you want to try, so don’t skip step 1. But once you’ve got it narrowed down, let it rip. You’ll find a myriad of options online, or run up to a local home improvement store or garden center to see them in action. For the DIYers among us, you can find plans online to create your own bins from plastic tubs, old wooden pallets, or even recycled pickle barrels. The natural processes active in your compost heap will create some heat and can pose a slim fire risk. Avoid positioning outside bins or heaps near sheds, fences or buildings, and make sure you monitor it, especially during periods of warmer weather. For those choosing inside composting, but worried about smells, many varieties of bins come with filters—keeping the good stuff inside and leaving the air outside smelling nice. 3. Fill ‘er up with green and brown The health of your compost bin will be determined by what you put in it. You’ll need a mix of fresh green garden waste (think grass clippings, fruit and vegetable peelings, coffee grounds and tea leaves) and dry, brown matter (like dead leaves, dead plants and weeds, and hay). The soft, green garden waste is nitrogen-rich and the dry brown waste is more carbon-rich– the balance you want for a good compost. Begin by placing a layer of woody brown matter on the bottom to create good airflow, and then layer green and brown matter whenever possible. 4. Compost dos and don’ts Did you know you can compost egg shells, paper towel rolls, toilet paper rolls, paper bags and torn-up cotton clothing? Add these items in moderation—your greens and browns are still the main players in this composting drama. Don’t put cooked food items into your compost, even if they are greens or browns, and never add meat, dairy products, bones or fat/grease/oils into your bin. These can attract vermin, smell bad, and disrupt the natural processes of your compost. Once your greens and browns get into your bin, your work is mostly done. The microbes and bacteria will soon be cranking out beautiful compost, and you can keep feeding them with more table scraps and dried leaves. Be sure to monitor your bin occasionally to ensure your composting process is still occurring successfully and healthfully. A good compost bin… Should be about as moist as a wrung-out sponge. If it looks extremely dry, you’re likely adding too much brown. Up your greens input, and do a light watering with a watering can. If it seems too wet, up your browns input until it evens out. Needs air to stay healthy, so make sure you aren’t packing the bin too full. If you have a rotating bin, be sure to give it a spin every couple of weeks. If you choose the cold composting method, you’ll need to occasionally “turn” your compost pile using a pitchfork or shovel to allow air to enter. If your compost starts looking slimy, it’s likely because it’s not getting enough air. Tip: Remove dirt and grime from your shovel, pitchfork and other gardening tools with a few drops of Dawn Ultra Dish Soap. 6. Home compost tips and tricks Like everything else, the more you engage in the process of composting, the more tips and tricks you’ll discover. But we can save you some time, by sharing our favorite composting hacks: Bury it. Especially if composting indoors, don’t leave fresh scraps exposed to air on the top of your compost pile. This could attract fruit flies and any other number of pesky bugs. Burying the fresh scraps will keep them at bay. If you can’t bury the scraps completely, cover them with fresh soil or brown matter. Bag it. If you do a lot of cooking, you’ll likely have all the greens you need… and it will be easy to neglect the browns. But that green-brown ratio is important, so keep a bag of shredded newspaper (for indoor composting) or dried leaves (for outdoor) handy for quick layering. Shred it. If composting inside, taking the extra time to shred waste into smaller sizes will help speed up the composting process. Bonus tip: The reality of composting is that it can sometimes get a little smelly. When you notice it start to smell, take it outside. Then freshen things up quickly with Febreze AIR. Compost can act as a water-retaining mulch, a liquid fertilizer (called “compost tea”) and a lawn fertilizer. Here’s how we put it to good use: To use as a mulch, spread it in a 2- to 3-inch layer around flowers, bushes, trees and shrubs. To make compost tea, steep a shovel-full of compost in a 5-gallon bucket for two to three days, and then pour the resulting liquid on your plants. It’s like liquid gold. To fertilize your lawn, just add a 1- to 3-inch layer of compost to the grass, and then rake it to evenly distribute. Over time, rain water will push the compost into the soil, feeding your lawn in the process. That’s it! With this beginners guide, you’re ready to start off on your composting adventure. Here’s to a greener yard, garden, and life.SHOP OUR FAVORITESCascade Platinum Plus Dishwasher Pod, Fresh ScentShop at AmazonMr. Clean Magic Eraser, Extra Durable, Multi Purpose CleanerShop at AmazonSwiffer PowerMop Multi-Surface Mop Kit for Floor CleaningShop at AmazonDawn Platinum Powerwash Dish Spray, Dish Soap, Fresh ScentShop at AmazonFebreze Plug Scent Booster Continuous Scent Device Oil DiffuserShop at Amazon Composting at home is an effective way to reduce waste while enriching your garden soil. With the right techniques, anyone can start their own composting system and enjoy the benefits of homemade compost. In this blog post, we’ll explore DIY composting at home through simple steps, ensuring you have the knowledge to create nutrient-rich compost effortlessly. Composting is a natural process where organic matter decomposes into a dark, crumbly substance called compost. This process is facilitated by microorganisms, fungi, and other decomposers that break down kitchen scraps, yard waste, and other biodegradable materials. The end product of DIY composting at home is a nutrient-rich soil amendment that enhances plant growth and reduces the need for chemical fertilizers. Waste Reduction: Composting significantly decreases the amount of waste sent to landfills. Instead of tossing organic materials into the trash, they are recycled into valuable compost. Nutrient-Rich Soil: The compost produced through DIY composting at home enriches the soil with essential nutrients. This results in healthier plants and gardens. Environmental Impact: Composting helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfills. By composting, you contribute positively to the environment. Cost Savings: Making your own compost reduces the need to purchase commercial fertilizers and soil amendments, leading to cost savings in gardening. Improved Soil Structure: Compost enhances soil structure, improving its ability to retain moisture and nutrients. There are various methods of DIY composting at home, including: Bin Composting: This method involves using a compost bin or container to collect and compost organic materials. Pile Composting: A simple method where you create a heap of organic waste in your backyard. Worm Composting (Vermicomposting): This method uses worms to break down food scraps, resulting in nutrient-rich worm castings. Choose a method that suits your space and needs. For effective DIY composting at home, gather the following materials: Green Materials: These are nitrogen-rich items like fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, grass clippings, and fresh leaves. Brown Materials: These are carbon-rich items like dried leaves, straw, cardboard, and paper. Water: Moisture is essential for the composting process. Ensure your compost is damp but not soggy. Maintaining a proper balance of green and brown materials is crucial for successful DIY composting at home. A good ratio is approximately 2:1 or 3:1 (brown to green). Too many greens can lead to a smelly compost, while too many browns can slow down the decomposition process. If you choose pile composting, follow these steps to build your compost pile: Layering: Start with a layer of coarse materials (like small branches) to allow airflow. Alternate layers of greens and browns. Aeration: Turn the pile regularly to aerate it, promoting faster decomposition. Aeration helps maintain the right temperature, ensuring that microorganisms thrive. Your compost pile should be moist but not overly wet. If it’s too dry, add water; if it’s too wet, add more brown materials. The ideal temperature for composting is between 130°F and 160°F (54°C to 71°C). This heat kills pathogens and weeds, creating high-quality compost. Composting is a natural process that takes time. Depending on conditions, your compost could take anywhere from a few weeks to several months to fully decompose. Be patient and continue to monitor your compost pile. If you’re using worm composting, the process may be quicker, as worms break down materials efficiently. When your compost is dark, crumbly, and earthy-smelling, it’s ready to use. This can take several months, but the wait is worth it. To harvest your compost: Separate Uncomposted Material: If you find larger pieces that haven’t decomposed, return them to the pile for further composting. Application: Use your homemade compost in gardens, flower beds, and potted plants. It’s an excellent amendment to enhance soil quality. To ensure successful DIY composting at home, avoid these common mistakes: Imbalanced Materials: Failing to maintain the right ratio of greens to browns can lead to odors or slow decomposition. Overwatering: Too much moisture can create a soggy compost pile, inhibiting airflow and slowing down the composting process. Ignoring Aeration: Regularly turning your compost pile is essential for aeration. Neglecting this can lead to compacted, anaerobic conditions. Adding Inappropriate Materials: Avoid composting meat, dairy, oily foods, and pet waste, as they can attract pests and create odors. Lack of Maintenance: Monitoring your compost and maintaining the right conditions is vital for successful decomposition. Once you master the basics of DIY composting at home, consider trying these advanced techniques: Bokashi Composting: This anaerobic process uses beneficial microorganisms to ferment kitchen waste, allowing for a broader range of materials, including meat and dairy. Compost Tea: This liquid fertilizer is made by steeping finished compost in water. It can be used to water plants for an extra nutrient boost. Hot Composting: This method speeds up the composting process by maintaining high temperatures (130°F to 160°F). It requires more attention to balance materials and aeration. DIY composting at home is a rewarding and eco-friendly practice that transforms kitchen scraps and yard waste into nutrient-rich compost. By following these simple steps, you can create a sustainable composting system that benefits both your garden and the environment. Remember, successful composting requires patience and attention to detail, but the rewards are well worth the effort. With the knowledge gained from this guide, you are now equipped to embark on your DIY composting at home journey. Enjoy the process and watch as your garden flourishes with the help of your homemade compost! 1. What materials can I compost at home? You can compost a variety of organic materials, including fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, eggshells, grass clippings, leaves, and shredded paper. Avoid composting meat, dairy, oils, and pet waste, as they can attract pests and cause odors. 2. How long does it take to compost at home? The time it takes to create compost can vary widely, depending on factors like temperature, moisture, and the materials used. Generally, it can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months for compost to be ready. 3. How often should I turn my compost pile? Turning your compost pile every few weeks is recommended to aerate it and promote faster decomposition. If you notice that the pile is compacted or smells unpleasant, more frequent turning may be needed. 4. What is the ideal ratio of green to brown materials? A good balance is about 2:1 or 3:1 (brown to green materials). This ratio helps maintain the right nitrogen to carbon balance for effective composting. 5. How do I know when my compost is ready? Finished compost is dark, crumbly, and has an earthy smell. You should not be able to recognize any of the original materials. If you find larger pieces, return them to the pile for further decomposition. 6. Can I compost in an apartment or small space? Yes! You can use compost bins, worm composting (vermicomposting), or Bokashi composting systems designed for small spaces. These methods are ideal for apartments and can be done indoors. 7. What should I do if my compost smells bad? A foul smell usually indicates that your compost is too wet or has too many green materials. To fix this, add more brown materials (like dried leaves or shredded paper) and turn the pile to improve aeration. 8. How can I speed up the composting process? To accelerate composting, maintain the right balance of materials, keep the pile moist but not soggy, and turn it regularly to aerate. You can also add compost activators like finished compost or manure. 9. Is it safe to compost pet waste? Generally, it’s best to avoid composting pet waste, especially from carnivorous animals like dogs and cats, as it may contain harmful pathogens. However, some people use dedicated systems for composting animal waste separately. 10. What can I do with the finished compost? You can use finished compost as a soil amendment for gardens, flower beds, and potted plants. It improves soil structure, increases nutrient content, and enhances moisture retention, promoting healthy plant growth. Composting is a form of recycling that has many benefits. By composting, you can reduce the amount of waste that goes into landfills, create a nutrient-rich soil amendment for your garden, and save money on fertilizer. compost pile with hay and manure The process of composting involves breaking down organic materials, such as food scraps and yard waste, into a usable form. This can be done through simple methods, such as placing organic materials in a bin and allowing them to decompose naturally. However, there are also many commercial composters available that speed up the process. No matter which method you choose, composting is a great way to reduce your environmental impact while also improving your garden. Composting 101: Stupid-Easy Compost Making in Piles & Bins Composting is a process of breaking down organic materials into a simple form that can be used as fertilizer for plants. There are a few main types of composting to be aware of. If you’re interested in composting but not sure which method is right for you, consider consulting with a local gardening expert. Cold composting is a method of decomposing organic matter, such as leaves and grass clippings, without the use of heat. Unlike hot composting, which can reach temperatures over 140 degrees Fahrenheit (60 degrees Celsius), cold composting occurs at ambient air temperatures. As a result, cold composting takes longer than hot composting, typically taking several months to a year. However, it is a simpler process that does not require as much attention. Cold composting also has the advantage of not killing weed seeds, making it ideal for recycling garden waste. To cold compost effectively, it is important to chop or shred materials to increase surface area and create a mix of high-carbon and high-nitrogen materials. Once you have assembled your ingredients, simply pile them up and let nature take its course. Over time, the pile will shrink as the material breaks down into rich, crumbly compost. Hot composting is a method of composting that uses high temperatures to speed up the decomposition process. When done correctly, hot composting can produce finished compost in as little as two weeks. The key to successful hot composting is maintaining proper aeration and moisture levels. This can be accomplished by regularly turning the compost pile and adding water as needed. In addition, hot composting requires a balance of carbon-rich and nitrogen-rich materials. A good ratio to aim for is 30:1 carbon to nitrogen. Vermicomposting is the process of using worms to convert organic waste into a nutrient-rich soil amendment. It is an efficient and eco-friendly way to reduce the volume of your kitchen scraps while also producing a valuable product for your garden. The worms consume the organic matter and break it down into a substance known as casts, which are an excellent source of nutrients for plants. Vermicomposting can be done in a simple bin system or in a more complex setup with multiple bins. Either way, it is a great way to reduce your environmental footprint while also creating a free, natural fertilizer for your plants. If you’re thinking about composting, one of the first things you’ll need to decide is where to put your compost bin. There are two main options: outdoors in your backyard, or indoors in your kitchen. Both have advantages and disadvantages, so it’s important to choose the option that’s right for you. If you have a large backyard, then outdoor composting is a great choice. You’ll be able to let nature take its course, and the end result will be healthy, nutrient-rich soil. However, if you live in an apartment or don’t have much space in your yard, then indoor composting may be a better option. It’s important to keep indoor compost bins clean and free of pests, but if you do it right, you’ll still be able to produce high-quality compost. So whichever option you choose, just make sure it’s the right one for you. Having an outside compost area doesn’t require a lot of room, really. You can make a compost area out of old pallets, a large piece of chicken wire wrapped around 4 posts, or use a composting barrel. wooden pallets for compost bin Simply empty your bucket out there when it gets full. This may present a bit of challenge to those living in an apartment or without a place outside to put a large area. BUT, it can be done. You can make your own bin, buy a bin, or simply compost in a pile. If you decide to make your own bin, there are many different plans available online or in books. How to Build a Compost Bin! Simple, Step by Step, DIY Tutorial! You can also find bins at hardware stores or home improvement stores. If you decide to buy a bin, be sure to choose one that is the right size for your needs and that has a tight-fitting lid to keep out pests. You can also find bins with two compartments, which is handy for turning the compost. There are also many different ways to compost without a bin. One method is simply to pile the compostable materials in a corner of your yard. Another method is to dig a hole and bury the material. Composting is a great way to reduce your household waste and create nutrient-rich soil for your garden. Best of all, it’s easy to do! Here are a few simple steps to get you started. Composting is a great way to reduce waste and encourage healthy plant growth. But what can you actually compost? The answer may surprise you. In addition to common kitchen scraps like fruit and vegetable peels, coffee grounds, and eggshells, you can also compost paper products, yard waste, and even some types of clothing. Basically, anything that was once alive can be composted. This includes leaves, twigs, and grass clippings. Pro tip: It’s helpful to shred or grind up larger materials before adding them to the bin. This will help them break down more quickly. Your kitchen scraps are known as “green” material. Simple enough, right? Grab yourself an old ice cream bucket, an old kitty litter bucket, or any bucket with a lid. Go to your local grocery store’s bakery and ask for an old icing bucket. They will usually give them out for free so they don’t have to deal with the trash. Store it in an easy to remember space, like either on the counter next to the sink, or under the sink in the kitchen. To use, simply add all your food scraps to the bucket. Avoid adding meat, bones, grease, or cheese, as they take a lot longer to decompose. They can also attract rodents. Citrus peels should also NOT be added to the compost bucket for the same reason. Use the peels to make your own natural cleaner. Your grass clippings when you mow the lawn, recently pulled weeds from the garden are also “green” material. What are some other “green” materials you can use? Most people know that kitchen scraps and grass clippings can be added to a compost pile. However, there are many other types of “green” materials that can be used as well. Coffee grounds, for example, are a great source of nitrogen. Banana peels and yard trimmings work great, too. eggshells and coffee grounds in a compost container Eggshells add calcium, which is essential for plant growth. Even hair and nail clippings can be composted, as they contain valuable phosphorus and potassium. In general, any type of organic material can be added to a compost pile. So don’t be afraid to experiment – you may be surprised at what makes for good compost! This would be shredded newspaper, sawdust, cardboard, shredded toilet paper tubes, wood chips, dry leaves, and straw. Instead of recycling that old newspaper, tear it into shreds and layer it on top of the green materials. You will want to keep a ratio of 3 “browns” to every 1 “green” to keep the compost from smelling. If it starts to produce odors, you may need to add some more “brown” to the mix. Did you know that the ratio of greens to browns in your compost bin is important for the health of your compost? Greens are high in nitrogen, while browns are high in carbon. The right ratio of greens to browns helps to ensure that your compost has the right amount of both nutrients. Too much nitrogen can cause your compost to smell bad, while too much carbon can make it take longer to break down. Add a layer of dead leaves or grass clippings to the bottom of the bin. Next, add a layer of green waste such as vegetable peelings or fruit scraps. Finally, top it off with a layer of soil. Once you’ve added all the layers, simply mix them together with a shovel or pitchfork. Be sure to turn the compost regularly so that air can circulate and speed up the decomposition process. In no time at all, you’ll have rich, nutrient-filled compost that’s perfect for adding to your garden beds. One of the most important things you can do for your compost bin is to aerate it regularly. Aerating helps to break up any clumps that may have formed, and it also allows oxygen to reach the microorganisms that are busy breaking down your organic matter. You can aerate your compost bin simply by turning it with a shovel or pitchfork every few weeks. So don’t be afraid to get your hands dirty – your compost bin will thank you for it! You don’t want it overly wet, but keeping it damp will help attract worms and keep the compost decomposing. If you find that it seems “dry”, hose it down a bit. Again, you don’t want to run the water all over, but just so that it’s damp. A nice, “gooshy” mess is what you are looking for. If it gets too dry, the worms will leave and find a more moist home. This is easy enough to do. For a large compost pile, simply take a pitch fork once a week or so and “turn” the pile, mixing the top down to the bottom as much as possible. This keeps air going to it, and the decomposition going. The more air it gets, the hotter it will get, and the faster it will decompose. If you have a small space, or don’t want to use a big pitchfork, a turning bin makes it easy to turn the compost and I have had great success getting good compost in as little as 3 weeks with it! large compost area Some gardeners may not be aware of the best way to use compost in their garden. The key is to apply it evenly and at the right time. For example, compost can be applied before planting to help the roots get established. It can also be added during the growing season to provide a boost of nutrients. For anyone who is interested in gardening, composting is a great way to create nutrient-rich soil for plants. And while it may seem like a simple process, there is actually a bit of science involved in making sure that the compost is ready to use. One way to tell if compost is ready is by its color. When it first starts to decompose, compost will be dry and brown. As it continues to break down, it will become darker and more crumbly. Once it is ready to use, compost should be a dark, rich brown color and have a pleasant earthy smell. Another way to tell if compost is ready is by its texture. Fresh compost will be chunky and rough, but as it decomposes, it will become finer and more crumbly. If you are still unsure, simply give the compost a squeeze – if it forms together in your hand without being too wet or dry, then it is ready to use. Not all materials are suitable for composting. Some items, such as meat and dairy products, can release harmful bacteria into the compost pile. Others, such as plastic and glass, will not break down over time. And still others, such as pet waste and treated wood, can release toxins that can harm plants. As a result, it’s important to be selective about what goes into a compost pile. The no-no list: meat dairy plastic glass pet waste treated wood Here are some common composting problems and how to solve them. If your compost is too wet, there are a few things you can do to fix the problem. First, try adding more dry materials such as leaves, straw, or shredded newspaper. This will help to absorb some of the excess moisture. Next, make sure you are aerating your compost regularly. This will help to keep the material from getting too compacted and will allow excess moisture to evaporate. Finally, if your compost bin is located in a shady spot, move it to a sunnier location. The heat will help to evaporate any excess moisture. If your compost pile smells bad, it may be because it’s too wet or there’s not enough air circulation. To fix this, mix in some dry leaves or straw and make sure the pile isn’t too compacted. Composting is a great way to reduce your carbon footprint and create nutrient-rich soil for your garden. And it’s easy to do! All you need is some organic matter, like kitchen scraps and leaves, and a way to contain it all. But what about weeds? Do they belong in the compost pile? The answer is… maybe. If the weeds are young and haven’t gone to seed yet, they can probably be composted without issue. However, if the weeds are mature and have already dropped seeds, it’s best to err on the side of caution and compost them separately. That way, you won’t risk introducing more weed seeds into your garden. You can also try composting weed seeds, but it’s not guaranteed to kill them all. The bottom line is that composting is a great way to reduce waste and build healthy soil, but make sure you know what you’re putting in your compost pile! If your compost is full of flies, it may be because it’s too moist, or there’s too much food waste in the mix. To fix this, add more dry brown material, and cover the pile with a tarp or lid. If you’ve ever had a compost pile, you know that they can get pretty hot – but what does it mean when your compost pile is steaming? It turns out, it’s a good sign! When the temperature of your compost pile gets hot enough, it means that the microbes are working hard to break down the organic matter. This process is essential to creating rich, nutrient-dense compost that will be great for your garden. So if you see steam coming off your compost pile, it just means that everything is working as it should! If your compost isn’t heating up, it may be because it’s too small or there’s too much green material. To fix this, add more brown material such as dead leaves or twigs, and turn the pile regularly to aerate it. If your compost pile is made up of mostly green materials, like grass clippings and vegetable scraps, it’s likely that the materials are clumping together. This is due to the high nitrogen content of green materials, which acts as a glue to bind the other organic matter together. While this isn’t necessarily a bad thing, it can make it difficult for air to circulate within the compost pile, which is essential for the composting process. To fix this problem, simply add a layer of brown materials, such as dead leaves or twigs, on top of the green materials. The brown materials will help to aerate the compost pile and prevent the materials from clumping together. You might think that composting is only possible if you have a large backyard or live in a rural area. However, with a little bit of planning, you can easily compost in an urban location. One option is to use a worm bin. Worms eat organic matter and produce nutrient-rich compost. Another option is to use a small outdoor compost bin. If you don’t have space for an outdoor bin, you can even compost indoors using a special container. If you’re interested in composting but don’t have the space for a compost bin, there’s good news. Many municipalities now offer composting programs that allow residents to drop off their food scraps at designated locations. The food scraps are then taken to a central location, where they are turned into nutrient-rich compost. This compost can be used by the municipality to improve local parks and gardens, or it can be sold to local farmers and gardeners. Municipal composting programs are a great way to reduce waste and help the environment. And best of all, they’re usually free or very affordable. So if you’re looking for a way to get started with composting, check to see if your municipality offers a composting program. Composting is a great way to reduce your waste, and it’s easier than you think. If you’re not sure where to start, consider these easy steps to get started composting today. Once you get the hang of it, you may find that composting becomes one of your favorite sustainable habits. So, getting your black gold for your garden isn’t hard. Just grab a bucket and you are on your way! last update: August 5th 2022 Heather’s homesteading journey started in 2006, with baby steps: first, she got a few raised beds, some chickens, and rabbits. Over the years, she amassed a wealth of homesteading knowledge, knowledge that you can find in the articles of this blog. Learn more about Heather and the rest of the writers on this page. Composting made easy is a wonderful way to turn kitchen scraps and garden waste into rich, natural soil.This process helps reduce trash while creating something valuable for plants.It works by breaking down organic material through natural decay, guided by nature’s own cycle.Composting can be done in small spaces or large gardens, fitting many lifestyles and needs.The smell of fresh earth and the sight of dark, crumbly compost bring a sense of accomplishment and connection to the environment.Learning how to compost simply opens doors to greener living with less effort than many imagine.This gentle art transforms everyday waste into a powerful resource for growth.Compost Ingredients Ultimate GuidePin it!Compost brewing magic is a garden goldmine for recycling kitchen and yard waste into nutrient-rich soil.Green materials like grass clippings, vegetable scraps, and coffee grounds provide nitrogen while brown materials such as cardboard, dead leaves, and hedge trimmings contribute carbon.Microorganisms work their decomposition magic when you mix these ingredients with proper air and water balance.Balancing nitrogen-rich greens and carbon-heavy browns creates the perfect decomposition environment.Maintaining a 3:1 ratio of browns to greens helps speed up composting.Kitchen scraps and yard waste transform into black, crumbly soil amendment within weeks to months.Garden Gold: Compost PowerPin it!Compost is nature's secret weapon for transforming gardens into lush, thriving landscapes.Mixing compost into garden beds provides essential minerals and beneficial microorganisms that help plants grow stronger and more resilient.Spreading a thin layer around plant bases works like a protective blanket, retaining moisture and suppressing weed growth.Roots absorb these rich nutrients quickly, promoting vigorous growth and vibrant foliage.Rich, dark compost signals healthy soil that supports robust plant development.Experienced gardeners know this organic material is the key to cultivating beautiful, productive gardens.Composting Heap Heat CheckPin it!Composting heat checks reveal the heartbeat of organic recycling magic.Warm surfaces signal active decomposition happening beneath the surface.Weekly inspections help monitor the breakdown process carefully.Cool temperatures mean you should grab a garden fork and mix materials thoroughly.Adding oxygen accelerates material transformation by stirring contents from top to bottom.Moisture plays a critical role, so sprinkle water if the mixture looks dry during mixing sessions.Regular turning and monitoring guarantee successful nutrient-rich compost for garden projects.Troubleshooting Compost ProblemsPin it!Composting solutions help gardeners transform kitchen scraps and yard waste into rich soil nutrients.Proper management tackles common challenges like slow decomposition and funky odors with simple techniques.Chopping ingredients into smaller pieces helps microbes break down organic matter faster.Maintaining the right mix of nitrogen-rich greens and carbon-heavy browns ensures healthy decomposition.Mixing the pile regularly introduces oxygen and prevents unpleasant smells.Avoiding meat and dairy products keeps pests away from your compost heap.Good compost management turns waste into valuable garden gold that nourishes plants and reduces landfill waste.Layered Compost SuccessPin it!Composting layers provide essential structure for breaking down organic materials efficiently.Browns and greens mix together strategically, creating nutrient-rich soil amendments for plants.Nitrogen-rich materials like grass clippings complement carbon-dense components such as small branches and cardboard.Water plays a crucial role in maintaining moisture levels for beneficial bacteria.Careful layering helps microorganisms transform kitchen scraps and yard waste into dark, crumbly compost.Strategic mixing prevents potential smell issues while supporting healthy organic matter breakdown.Is Your Compost Fully Broken Down Yet?Pin it!Compost maturity signals success through rich, dark brown colors and earthy aromas gardeners recognize instantly.Home composters learn subtle signs indicating decomposition completion with simple sensory checks.Dark brown hues replace earlier lighter materials, signaling transformation is nearly complete.Natural earthiness replaces previous organic waste scents.Experienced gardeners understand decomposed matter looks like dark, crumbly soil with no recognizable food scraps.Materials break down completely into nutrient-dense elements perfect for garden beds.Texture becomes uniform and loose, resembling rich soil you can sprinkle across planting areas.Waiting patiently rewards you with premium organic fertilizer without expensive store purchases.Compost Bin Mastery SimplifiedPin it!Compost bins are gardening magic wands that transform kitchen scraps and yard waste into rich, nutrient-packed soil gold.Kitchen leftovers like fruit peels, coffee grounds, and vegetable trimmings mingle with dry leaves, grass clippings, and small twigs inside these special containers.Microorganisms work their secret breakdown process, breaking apart organic materials faster than you can imagine.Proper airflow and moisture help speed up decomposition, ensuring your compost develops quickly and effectively.Mixing brown materials like dried leaves with green materials such as fresh grass clippings creates perfect nutrient balance.Adding a handful of soil occasionally helps introduce beneficial bacteria that accelerate the composting process.Watching kitchen waste turn into dark, crumbly soil feels like gardening alchemy that reduces waste and nourishes your plants. Composting kitchen scraps is one of the easiest and most impactful ways to reduce waste and help the environment. By turning your food waste into nutrient-rich compost, you can enrich your soil, promote healthy plant growth, and minimize the amount of waste sent to landfills. Whether you have a small apartment or a spacious garden, starting a kitchen scrap composting system is simple and rewarding. Here are 7 easy steps to get you started on your composting journey. The first step to composting kitchen scraps is collecting the right materials. A wide variety of organic waste from your kitchen can be composted, including fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, tea bags, and eggshells. The key is to avoid adding non-compostable materials such as meat, dairy, or oily foods. What to Do: Start by setting up a container in your kitchen where you can collect scraps like fruit peels, carrot tops, coffee grounds, and egg shells. Keep a small compost bin with a lid to store these scraps until you’re ready to take them outside to your compost pile or bin. Consider a countertop compost bin or a container with a charcoal filter to reduce odors. Pro Tip: To avoid odors and pests, empty your kitchen scrap container regularly and keep it covered. The next step is choosing the right composting method for your living situation. If you have a backyard garden, traditional compost bins or compost piles work well. For smaller spaces, you might opt for a compost tumbler or indoor methods like vermicomposting (using worms). What to Do: Traditional Compost Bin: Ideal for larger spaces, you can buy or build a compost bin from wood, wire, or plastic. Compost Tumbler: A compost tumbler is a rotating drum that speeds up the composting process and is great for small spaces. Vermicomposting: If you live in an apartment, consider worm composting, which involves keeping a bin of worms that eat your kitchen scraps. Pro Tip: Choose the composting method that fits your space, time, and how much waste you generate. A successful compost pile requires a balance of green materials (rich in nitrogen) and brown materials (rich in carbon). Kitchen scraps like fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, and eggshells are considered green materials. Brown materials include dried leaves, cardboard, and shredded newspaper. What to Do: Add a layer of brown materials at the bottom of your compost bin or pile to help with drainage and aeration. Alternate layers of green and brown materials. For every 2 parts of green materials, add about 3 parts brown materials. Be mindful of the moisture levels—your compost should be moist, but not too wet. Pro Tip: Keep a stash of brown materials like dry leaves, shredded paper, or straw, which are easily found around your yard or garden. Larger pieces of kitchen scraps like fruit peels, onion skins, or stems can take longer to break down. To speed up the composting process, it’s helpful to chop, shred, or break down the scraps before adding them to the compost pile. What to Do: Use a knife or food processor to chop up larger scraps. Break down hard materials like corn cobs, watermelon rinds, or pumpkin skins into smaller pieces. For better results, cut or shred any large, woody items like stems or tree branches before adding them to the pile. Pro Tip: The smaller the material, the quicker it will decompose. So, take the extra step to chop or shred when possible. Turning your compost pile is essential for maintaining the right conditions for decomposition. Turning introduces oxygen, which is necessary for aerobic microbes to break down the organic material. Regular turning helps speed up the process and prevents the pile from becoming too compacted or smelly. What to Do: If using a compost bin, turn the contents every 1-2 weeks with a garden fork, shovel, or a compost tumbler. For a larger compost pile, turn it with a pitchfork or shovel to ensure that air reaches all parts of the pile. Check that the compost is moist, and if it’s too dry, add water or green materials. If it’s too wet, add more brown materials to absorb the moisture. Pro Tip: Turning your pile regularly helps create a well-aerated environment that speeds up decomposition. Composting takes time—usually between 2 to 6 months, depending on the method and conditions. During this time, it’s important to keep an eye on the progress and make adjustments as needed. The compost should heat up, break down, and transform into a dark, crumbly material over time. What to Do: Monitor the temperature of the pile, which should stay between 130-160°F (54-71°C) for optimal decomposition. Check the pile regularly to ensure it’s moist, well-aerated, and has a pleasant, earthy smell. If the pile becomes too dry or too wet, make adjustments. Keep the pile covered with a tarp or lid to maintain warmth and moisture, especially during colder months. Pro Tip: If your pile is not heating up, it may lack nitrogen (green materials). Add more kitchen scraps, grass clippings, or manure to get the pile cooking again. When your compost is ready, it should look dark and crumbly, with an earthy smell. At this point, the compost can be used to enrich garden soil, improve plant health, and boost soil fertility. You’ll know your compost is finished when it no longer resembles the original scraps and has decomposed into nutrient-rich humus. What to Do: Sift through the compost to remove any large, undecomposed materials and add them back to the pile for further breakdown. Spread the finished compost over garden beds or mix it into the soil to enhance plant growth. Store any extra compost in a cool, dry place to use later. Pro Tip: Use your compost to boost soil health, improve water retention, and provide a natural, chemical-free fertilizer for your plants. Starting to compost kitchen scraps is a simple yet powerful way to reduce waste, enhance soil health, and contribute to environmental sustainability. By following these 7 easy steps—gathering scraps, choosing your composting method, balancing materials, turning the pile, monitoring the process, and harvesting the compost—you’ll be well on your way to creating nutrient-rich compost for your garden. Not only will you reduce the amount of organic waste you send to landfills, but you’ll also enrich your soil and promote healthy plant growth. Happy composting! Tags Compost Unlock the secrets of composting with our easy guide Understanding Composting. Turn kitchen scraps into garden gold and make Mother Nature proud. Join us!Ever wondered how you can turn your kitchen scraps into a treasure for your garden?Well, the answer lies in ‘Understanding Composting’. It’s a simple, eco-friendly process that can transform your waste into nutrient-rich soil.Not only does it help your plants thrive, but it also contributes to a healthier planet.So, let’s dive in and unravel the magic of composting together!Understanding CompostingWelcome to our comprehensive guide on understanding composting.If you’ve ever been curious about how to turn your everyday waste into a garden’s best friend, you’re in the right place.In this post, we’ll explore the science behind composting, the different types you can try, and how to get started right at home.We’ll also tackle common composting challenges and discuss the incredible impact composting can have on our environment.So, whether you’re a seasoned gardener or just starting out, there’s something here for everyone.Let’s embark on this green journey together!Definition of CompostingLet’s start at the beginning, shall we?Composting, in its simplest form, is a natural process that transforms your organic waste, think kitchen scraps like vegetable peels, coffee grounds, and eggshells into a rich, earthy substance that gardeners often refer to as ‘black gold’.This transformation happens thanks to the hard work of microorganisms that break down the waste, turning it into nutrient-rich compost. It’s a bit like magic, but it’s actually science!Importance of CompostingNow, you might be wondering, Why should I compost? Well, there are a ton of reasons!For starters, composting is a fantastic way to reduce the amount of waste we send to landfills.Did you know that about 30% of what we throw away are food scraps and yard waste?By composting, we can divert these materials from landfills and put them to good use in our gardens instead.But the benefits of composting go beyond waste reduction. The compost you create is packed full of nutrients that your plants will love.It improves the structure and health of your soil, helping your plants grow stronger and healthier.Plus, it’s a natural alternative to chemical fertilizers, which is a win for your garden and the environment.And speaking of the environment, composting also plays a role in fighting climate change.When organic waste ends up in a landfill, it decomposes in a way that produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas.Composting that waste instead can significantly reduce methane emissions.So, by composting, you’re not just nurturing your garden – you’re also helping to protect our planet. How amazing is that?Basics of CompostingReady to get down to the nitty-gritty? Let’s delve into the basics of composting.This section is all about understanding the science behind this natural process, the steps involved, and the wonderful benefits it brings.Whether you’re a newbie to the composting world or just need a refresher, we’ve got you covered.So, let’s roll up our sleeves and get our hands a little dirty as we explore the fascinating world of composting!The Science Behind CompostingLet’s kick things off with a bit of science. Composting is a natural process, but there’s a whole lot of biology and chemistry happening behind the scenes.When you add

right temperature:Adjust the pile’s size. Larger piles tend to retain heat better than smaller ones.For a cool pile, try adding a commercial compost starter to introduce more beneficial microbes.If the pile is too hot, aerate it more frequently and consider adding more brown materials.Look for steam rising from the pile, which is a normal sign of active decomposition.Use an elongated soil thermometer to check the pile’s internal temperature.Temperature fluctuations are normal throughout the composting process. You can insulate your compost pile with straw or a tarp during colder months to help retain heat and maintain microbial activity. In warmer months, shade the pile to prevent it from drying out.One way to test if your compost is ready for use is by conducting a simple grass-growing test. Take a handful of compost and place it in a small pot. Sprinkle a few grass seeds on top. Water lightly and place the pot in a warm, sunny location. Monitor the pot for about a week. If the grass seeds sprout within a week, your compost is ready to use.If the seeds fail to sprout, the compost might need more time or adjustments to its composition. This simple step can save you time and ensure you’re adding fully decomposed, nutrient-rich compost to your garden.