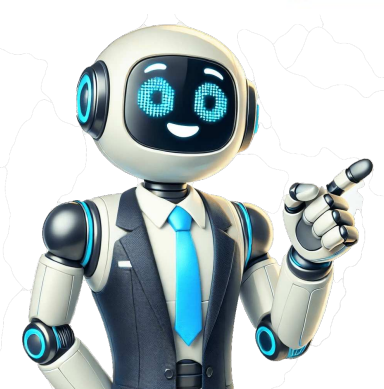


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your life, and garden, greener with these 7 easy steps. Where do your table scraps go when you throw them out? The picture isn't pretty. A study by the Environmental Protection Agency found that 21% of all municipal solid waste was food scraps—something 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 composting. Yes, even you! Composting 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 learn about the different types of composting available to you. Composting can be done indoors or outdoors, in a small space or a large one. The most common methods are vermicomposting (using worms) and hot composting (using a pile of organic matter). Both methods have pros and cons, so it's important to understand the differences before you get started. 2. Choose your composting method and location Once you've decided on a method, you need to choose a location. For hot composting, you'll need a large, open area with good drainage and access to water. For vermicomposting, you'll need a container or bin that's suitable for the method. 3. Gather your composting materials The next step is to gather the materials you'll need for your composting method. For hot composting, you'll need a large pile of organic matter, including food scraps, yard waste, and brown materials like straw or hay. For vermicomposting, you'll need a bin or container, worms, and a mix of organic matter and bedding. 4. Start your composting process Once you have your materials, it's time to start the composting process. For hot composting, you'll need to build a large pile and turn it regularly to keep it aerated. For vermicomposting, you'll need to add your materials to your bin and let the worms do the work. 5. Monitor your composting progress As your composting process gets underway, you'll need to monitor it regularly to make sure it's going well. For hot composting, you'll need to check the temperature of the pile and the moisture level. For vermicomposting, you'll need to check the moisture level and the health of the worms. 6. Harvest your compost Once your compost is ready, it's time to harvest it. For hot composting, you'll need to turn the pile and remove the finished compost. For vermicomposting, you'll need to remove the worms and the finished compost. 7. Use your compost in your garden The final step is to use your compost in your garden. Compost is a great fertilizer for all types of plants, and it can help improve the soil structure and water retention. You can use it as a top dressing for your plants, or mix it into the soil before planting. Composting is a simple and effective way to reduce waste and improve your garden. It's a great way to give your garden a boost, and it's a great way to help the environment. So, if you're looking for a way to make your garden greener, composting is the way to go. It's a simple and effective way to reduce waste and improve your garden. It's a great way to give your garden a boost, and it's a great way to help the environment. So, if you're looking for a way to make your garden greener, composting is the way to go.

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.