

# Amazing Soil...Breaking It Down.

# Making Compost!



Do you ever wonder what happens to the leaf that falls from a tree or the grasshopper that dies and falls to the ground? Where do the grass clippings go after they come out of the lawn mower? The answer: Decomposition. Plants and animals decompose when they die. Composting speeds up this process. The result: fantastic black rich material we call compost that is a great soil amendment. Compost is rich in nutrients plants need and it helps improve soil properties.

## Composting is kind of like cooking.

Ingredients like leaves, grass clippings and food wastes are combined with a little water and allowed to “cook”. Organisms like bacteria and fungi, sowbugs and ground beetles “eat” the materials being composted and generate a material that is what our soils need.

## What can you compost?

Well, lots of things.

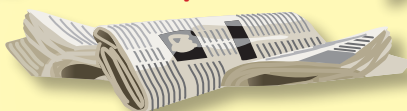
### Food Wastes



### Grass Clippings



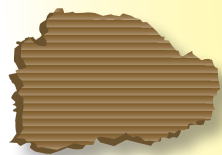
### Paper



### Manure



### Cardboard



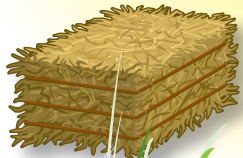
### Coffee Grounds



### Leaves



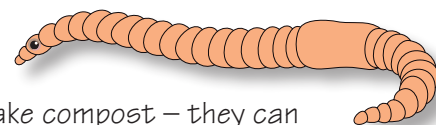
### Straw



### Wood Chips



## This is interesting:



Worms can be used to make compost – they can produce their weight in castings each day



Compost can be made in your backyard or in giant piles turned by huge machines



In 2011, the University of Missouri-Columbia began composting food wastes from its dining halls – keeping 270 tons of waste from landfills

## Fun to Do

You can make your own compost. Gather leaves in the fall, grass clippings during the warmer months and make a compost pile somewhere in the corner of your yard or garden. Put down a layer of leaves six to eight inches thick. Add some water to the leaves. Next add a three- to four-inch layer of grass clippings. On top of the grass clipping you can add a little soil or compost. You can begin repeating the leaves, grass clippings and soil layers adding a little water after each layer of leaves. Ideally your pile would be at least five feet in diameter and about three feet tall when you are done. After a few weeks, turn the pile by lifting the materials with a shovel or pitchfork and making a new pile. You should begin to see changes in the material – it should be getting smaller and darker in color. In three to six months you should have black crumbly compost. This material is ready to improve your soil.

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