

Home Composting “Turning Your Spoils To Soil” Video Transcript

Time	Video	Audio
0:00	Introductory text: CT DEP Recycling Program	Music
0:13	People mixing compost piles, planting gardens, mixing soil, mowing lawns	Home composting is our way of speeding up and enhancing Mother Nature’s decomposition process. On the forest floor, it may take several years before leaves are transformed by naturally occurring organisms into rich organic soil. But by composting, you can create conditions under which these organisms will flourish, turning your yard and kitchen waste into a free, beneficial soil amendment for your garden, lawn, and potted plants in a matter of months. Home composting is less expensive and more efficient than transferring organic wastes to an incinerator, landfill, or even a centralized composting facility. It is environmentally sound, can be done almost anywhere, and enables householders to substantially reduce their trash. This program explains the basics of how to recycle your yard and kitchen waste through home composting, describes how to use your yard waste as mulch, and explains the importance of leaving grass clippings on the lawn. Home composting is not difficult or time consuming.
1:41	Images of mushrooms, centipedes, and worms	Most of the work is done by soil organisms. Bacteria, molds, fungi, beetles, centipedes, insects and earthworms are just some of the organisms which work together to decompose, or recycle, organic materials into humus. Like us, they need food, oxygen, and water for survival.
2:03	Images of food waste, dry and woody materials	Food for the microbes is your yard waste and kitchen scraps. These contain carbon for energy, and nitrogen for growth and reproduction. Dry, woody things like dead autumn leaves, straw, paper, and sawdust are high in carbon. Fresh, moist materials like grass clippings, vegetable scraps, garden waste, coffee grounds, and manures are good sources of nitrogen.
2:30	Woman mixing compost heap,	Composting a diverse mix of materials generally results in a good balance of carbon

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	<p>finding a worm</p> <p>digging holes with pitchfork.</p>	<p>and nitrogen. Oxygen must be available for aerobic organisms to thrive. Oxygen can be supplied by periodically turning or mixing the pile with a pitchfork or by poking holes in it with a broom handle or special aeration tool. Aeration keeps the compost pile from developing unpleasant odors.</p>
3:00	Compost heap being sprayed with water	Water is essential. With too little water, the organism will slow down and can die. Too much water will eliminate oxygen and odors may result. The material in the pile should be kept as damp as a wrung-out sponge.
3:15	Photo of items to include in compost	Countless-things can be composted at home - citrus rinds, vegetable stalks and peelings, spoiled fruit and vegetables; coffee grounds, coffee filters and tea bags; egg shells, peanut shells, straw, weeds, garden waste, and paper towels to name a few.
3:35	Photo of items not to include in compost	But not everything belongs in the compost pile. DO NOT ADD meat or fish scraps, bones, fats, grease, oil, peanut butter; or dairy products, such as milk, cheese, butter, mayonnaise and yogurt. These foods can attract pests or cause odors. DO NOT ADD diseased plants, weeds that have gone to seed, or the roots of invasive plants such as quack grass, wild morning glory, and Bittersweet, which may survive the composting process and take root where the finished compost is used. Dog and cat waste can carry parasites transmittable to humans and SHOULD NOT be added to the pile.
4:20	Footage of different types of compost bins	Using a compost bin to contain your organic materials may be preferable to an open compost pile because it discourages animals, makes the pile easier to manage, helps retain heat and moisture, and tends to look neater. There are many kinds of ready-made bins available through garden centers, department stores, and other retail outlets. Some are small and designed specifically for kitchen waste. These are referred to as "digesters". Others are large enough to accommodate both yard and kitchen waste. With little expense and effort, you can build your own bin using scrap lumber, fencing, cinder blocks, pallets, or a combination of materials.

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5:05	Demonstration of constructing a bin out of pallets	A bin must be at least three feet wide, three feet long, and three feet high to provide enough mass to retain the heat generated by the microbes. It shouldn't be bigger than five feet in any dimension for ease of handling and to prevent compaction. The bin usually has an open base, which provides drainage and allows the composting materials to come to contact with natural soil organisms. A top is optional.
5:34	Making an animal-proof compost bin	Making sure that only the appropriate food scraps are added to the pile is the best method for keeping animals out of your compost. However, animal-proof bins can be purchased commercially, or made by drilling 1/4 inch holes in the sides, bottom and top of a trashcan with a tight, locking lid. A wooden bin can be animal-proofed by lining it with 1/2 inch metal mesh, and securing a top.
6:00	Man working with compost pile	How fast composting takes place depends on the kinds of materials you add to the pile and the amount of time you are willing to dedicate to composting. The "Art" of composting is simply balancing certain factors (carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and moisture) to convert organic items into rich humus within the time frame you have chosen.
6:29	Passive composting bin	If you have little time to spend on composting, and there's no hurry for a finished compost, you may want to try the "passive" method using a "holding bin". It is one of the easiest ways to compost since no labor is required other than placing wastes in a bin and harvesting the compost from the bottom of the pile about 8 to 12 months later.
6:50	Active composting bin	If you have a large volume of organic wastes or want finished compost sooner, the "active" method may be more appropriate, using a turning unit. Turning units typically consist of a series of bins or a rotating barrel. This is an active method because the pile is periodically turned or moved into the next bin, which supplies oxygen to the organisms allowing them to break down the wastes quickly. Weekly aeration can result in finished compost in less than two months.
7:23	Demonstrating the use of	Whichever method you choose, passive or active, the recipe for creating a compost pile is

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	compost containers	<p>the same. Start by placing your bin in a convenient location with good drainage. It can be in the sun or shade. Gather some materials to be composted keeping in mind diversity, texture, carbon, and nitrogen. Chopping or shredding the material will help speed up the composting process. Put a layer of dry, woody, high-carbon materials such as leaves, straw, or sawdust from untreated wood in the bottom of the bin. Sprinkle with water to dampen the materials to the consistency of a wrung-out sponge. Then, add a layer of moist nitrogen-rich materials such as grass clippings, garden spoils, and cow or horse manure. The thickness of the layers isn't critical, but no layer should be more than 6 inches deep. Mix the two layers together. A shovel full of soil or finished compost every so often will add even more organisms to the pile. Continue alternating, mixing, and watering the layers as materials become available or until the bin is full.</p>
8:40	Putting thermometer into compost pile	<p>Don't be surprised if the compost pile is warm on the inside within a few days. Heat is a normal by-product of composting and indicates that the microorganisms are working to break down the materials. Over time the volume of material in the bin will shrink.</p>
8:58	Adding kitchen scraps to compost pile	<p>Appropriate kitchen scraps can be added as they become available, and should be buried in the center of the pile. Keep a container on the counter while preparing meals to easily collect the kitchen scraps. The container of scraps may be covered and stored in the refrigerator or under the counter until it is emptied into the compost bin. You can continue to put food scraps, coffee grounds, houseplant cuttings, and other organic items into the pile throughout the year. The composting process will slow down during the winter months, but will speed up again when spring arrives.</p>
9:35	Adding leaves to a pile and using a shredder	<p>Leaves alone will compost, but it will take a bit longer than if they are mixed with grass clippings, manure, or other nitrogen materials. Although not essential, shredding leaves with a rotary lawn mower or home shredder will accelerate the composting process and quickly reduce their volume when space for composting is limited.</p>

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9:57	Image of composted soil	You'll know that your compost is ready to harvest when it's dark brown, crumbly, earthy smelling and no longer resembles the original material. If you have used the passive method, the more finished compost will be found near the bottom of the pile...
10:13	Sifting out finished compost	...you may want to screen your compost to remove pieces of woody materials, eggshells, and other items that have not totally decomposed and return them to the compost bin. Finished compost is referred to as "black gold" by experienced gardeners because they know how valuable it is.
10:34	Gardening with finished compost	Compost restores life to soil by helping to retain moisture, improve texture, and reduce erosion. It provides plants with essential nutrients in a time-release fashion. Compost may be incorporated into your vegetable or flower gardens about one month before planting by applying a 3 inch layer of compost and mixing it thoroughly into the top 4 to 6 inches of soil. Compost can be used as a side dressing during the growing season and mixed into each transplant hole or seed furrow. To make a nutrient-rich potting soil, mix equal amounts of finished compost, soil, and sand. You can use screened compost as a lawn top-dressing by spreading it uniformly on the surface to a depth of 1/8 to 1/4 inch.
11:30	Using leaf shredder	Composting is not the only way to reduce and recycle your yard waste. Shred your leaves and brush into a mulch to use around plants, trees, and shrubs or on slopes.
11:42	Spreading mulch	Mulch reduces weed problems, adds nutrients to the soil, moderates soil temperature and moisture, and helps control erosion by protecting the soil surface. Woody mulches are best used in perennial gardens, under trees and shrubs, and as pathway material. Leaves and dried grass clippings are good mulches for annual vegetable and flower gardens. Leaves should be shredded and allowed to degrade slightly before being used, and dried grass clippings should be applied less than 1" thick to prevent matting. Mulching with grass clippings, which have been treated recently with herbicides, can harm your plants. As a precaution, mulch with clippings from treated lawns only after two lawn mowings.

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12:30	Collecting grass clippings, mowing a lawn	Grass clippings can account for up to 50% of your waste during the growing season, don't bag and dispose of your grass clippings. If they are not composted or used as mulch, leave them on the lawn where they, can help improve the soil. Each bag of grass clippings is equivalent to a quarter pound of usable nitrogen. During dry spells, clippings left on the lawn help retain moisture in the soil. You can conserve water; reduce the amount of money you spend on fertilizers and garbage bags.
13:07	Distributing grass clippings and mowing a lawn	And save lots of your own time and energy by recycling grass clippings back into the lawn. To maintain your lawn properly, cut your lawn when it is dry. Mow when it is 3 to 4 inches tall and never cut it shorter than 2 inches. Use a sharp mower blade, and avoid over-fertilizing your lawn. Turf experts agree that clippings do not contribute to thatch. The fact is, grass clippings are almost 80% moisture and decompose quickly.
13:42	Mixing compost pile	As you have seen, helping to reduce, reuse, and recycle our yard and kitchen wastes is easy and can be very rewarding.
13:53	Image of people working a garden	Whether you are motivated by having the best garden in the neighborhood, improving our environment, or saving money: home composting, mulching and leaving grass clippings on the lawn are the smart things to do. To learn more write the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Recycling Program at the address on your screen.
14:10	Text: CT DEP Recycling Program 165 Capitol Ave. Hartford, CT 06106 Home Composting "Turning Your Spoils To Soil" Presented by: The Connecticut Department of Environmental	Music

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	<p>Protection Waste Management Bureau Timothy R.E. Keeney, Commissioner</p> <p>Copyright 1991 The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Recycling Program</p> <p>Project Coordinator and Technical Advisor: Kathy C. Alexander</p> <p>Producer/Director: L.C. Maxfield, UCIMT-UCONN</p>	

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