

When is material fully composted?

Finished compost is a dark brown, crumbly, soil-like material with a sweet or musty smell. When you can't recognize any of the materials you put in, compost is ready. The time required to fully compost materials will vary from six weeks to a year depending on pile type, composition, temperatures, moisture content, and air circulation.

Use finished compost.

Incorporate compost into the top layer of soil anywhere in the garden. Mix it into potting mixes. Topdress your lawn or garden. Add some to planting holes.

University of Florida/IFAS
Monroe County Extension Services
1100 Simonton Street, Suite 2-260
Key West, FL 33040
Tel: 305-292-4501
Fax: 305-292-4415
E-mail: monroe@ifas.ufl.edu

Visit our Web site
<http://monroe.ifas.ufl.edu>



The Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences is an Equal Employment Opportunity-Affirmative Action Employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap or national origin.

What's wrong?

My pile stinks!

- Check the 'don't compost' list
- Cover all material with 'browns'
- Don't add large amounts of grass clippings all at once without incorporating into pile
- Add 'browns' and turn pile

I have animal pests!

- Don't add meat, milk, fat, bones, or fish
- Secure the lid or buy 'rodent proof' model

It's taking forever!

- Cut materials as small as possible
- Increase size of pile
- If too dry, add water while turning pile
- Add compost starter or finished compost

I don't want to turn the pile!

- You don't have to but it will speed things up
- It might take a year to make compost

The pile is too dry!

- Add water while turning pile to the consistency of a wrung out sponge

It's too wet!

- Add dry 'brown' material such as leaves or mulch to the consistency of a wrung out sponge

There's bugs in and around the composter!

- Cover all food waste with a layer of 'browns'
- Some bugs are processing the wastes into compost, so welcome them

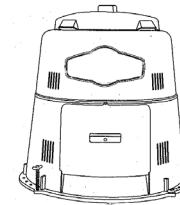
My compost has sprouted plants!

- Don't put weeds that have gone to seed in the pile

I don't have room!

- Try worm composting under the kitchen sink
- Use an upside down trash can: a Keys composter

How to compost in the Florida Keys



How to make compost:
Building the pile, Maintaining it,
How to use your compost when
it's ready, and Troubleshooting.

Get started today!

UF UNIVERSITY of
FLORIDA
IFAS Extension



Get started composting today.

- Identify a suitable site for your outdoor compost pile.
- Avoid building the pile against wooden structures.
- For quickest results use an enclosed compost bin.
- Have a turning tool such as a pitchfork or shovel.
- Always cover greens with browns.
- Keep your pile as moist as a wrung-out sponge.
- Fill your composter and keep it FULL.
- When adding fresh material to the pile, turn and fluff the pile to incorporate the new material within the “hotter” center sections of the pile.



Begin the pile.

Put down a layer of browns: twigs and woody materials. Every day, toss in your food scraps and fresh plant trimmings. Cover with a layer of browns.

Moisten.

Mix.

Repeat often.



Put these in the pile.

BROWNS

- Mulch
- Dried leaves
- Twigs
- Dried grass
- Woody materials

GREENS

- Soft green plant trimmings, leaves
- Grass clippings
- All fruit & vegetable peelings
- Rinsed-out, crushed eggshells
- Coffee grounds, filters, & tea bags

Don't put in the pile.

- Meat, bones & fish products
- Dairy products & grease
- Dog, cat, bird, & pet feces
- Sawdust from plywood, painted, or treated wood
- Diseased or pesticide treated vegetation

Here's why to compost:

Save money by replacing bagged potting soil with compost.

Save water by helping the soil hold moisture and reduce water runoff.

Help garden and house plants by improving soil and plant health.

Benefit the community by recycling valuable organic resources where they are generated thereby reducing solid waste.