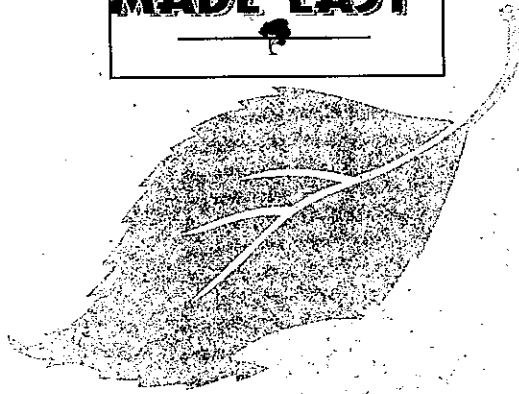


**TURN
OVER
A NEW
LEAF
BACKYARD
COMPOSTING
MADE EASY**



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND CONSUMER SERVICES
BOB CRAWFORD, COMMISSIONER

Dear Friends,

Every year Americans throw away more than 24 million tons of leaves and grass clippings. In fact, an average American family produces more than 1,200 pounds of organic garbage every year. And in the fall, leaves alone account for 75 percent of our nation's solid waste.

Since it costs up to \$65 a ton to dump solid waste in landfills, taxpayers could save a lot by recycling their leaves and clipping right in their own backyards through a simple, ancient process known as composting.

The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has teamed up with your local recycling program to invite you to give backyard composting a try.

Besides reducing landfill costs to our state, you will produce a rich soil and plant additive that can enrich your plants and garden.

Florida's farmers have taken the lead on composting in recent years, increasing their use of organic compost to grow our food. But you don't have to be a farmer to enjoy the benefits of composting. This brochure will give you the basic information you need to recycle your yard waste simply and easily, even on a small city lot.

Please take a few minutes to read this brochure, then join with your neighbors all over Florida to "Turn Over a New Leaf."

Bob Crawford
Commissioner of Agriculture

WHAT IS COMPOSTING

Composting is the age-old process of turning organic material you normally throw away — leaves, grass clippings, twigs, branches and kitchen scraps — into a rich soil enhancer. When this fertile mixture is added to Florida's porous sandy soils or dense, clay soils, it enriches them and improves the vitality of your plants at little or no cost to you.

HOW COMPOSTING WORKS

In a compost heap, billions of organisms break down waste into forms that can best be used by plants. The finished compost will add nutrients and humus to the soil, improving its texture and increasing its ability to hold air and water.

GETTING STARTED

Yard wastes can be composted without a bin if you don't mind the appearance of an uncontained compost mound in your yard. Start your compost pile in a corner of your garden. Select a level site near a water source and away from direct sunlight. An ideal size for most yards is 3 feet by 3 feet by 3 feet.

If you prefer, you may purchase a compost bin or build one of your own. Many different designs are available, and you can get a variety of plans free-of-charge from your county extension agent. You can make a simple bin from galvanized chicken wire or by drilling several rows of holes around a lidded garbage can.

DON'T COMPOST

bones
dairy products
fat
fish
meat
plastics
poultry
synthetics
vegetable oils

DO COMPOST

apple cores (G)	lettuce leaves (G)
bark (B)	manure (G)
citrus rinds (B)	nut shells (B)
coffee grounds (G)	paper (B)
egg shells (G)	stalks & stems (G)
feathers (B)	vegetable scraps (G)
grass clippings (G)	weeds, seedless (G)
hair (G)	twigs (B)
leaves (B)	wood ashes or chips (B)
G = greens	B = browns



WHAT TO COMPOST

Leaves, twigs, grass clippings and kitchen wastes are easily composted. Larger woody material must be manually broken up or run through a chipper/shredder machine to reduce the material to a size suitable for faster composting.

HOW TO COMPOST

Composting is easy, since it works practically by itself. When building your compost pile, try to use alternate layers of "green" material, which are your grass clippings, weeds and kitchen scraps, and "brown" material, such as fallen leaves, twigs, branches, sawdust and shredded paper.

Each layer should be 3-4 inches thick.

Keep the material moist, but not soggy. Use a rake or pitchfork to turn over the material in your compost pile every week to allow oxygen to circulate. This helps to speed decomposition.

Your compost is ready to use when it is dark in color, crumbly to the touch, and the original materials that make up the mixture cannot be identified. This may take 3-4 months if you turn the pile frequently or up to a year if you don't turn the pile at all.

USING COMPOST

Compost can be used as potting soil, a soil additive or mulch. Apply a thin, half-inch layer on top of your grass or mix that amount into your garden soil. If you remove no more than one inch of grass each time you mow, you may leave grass trimmings right on the lawn to decompose.

Compost can also be used as a mulch around trees, shrubs and flowers. Build a layer 2-5 inches deep around plants and add new compost as needed.

**A PUBLIC SERVICE OF THE
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND CONSUMER SERVICES AND
YOUR LOCAL RECYCLING PROGRAM.**