



## COMPOST & MULCH

### COMPOSTING

Over 1/3 of your garbage is organic material like fruit and vegetable scraps, egg shells, tea bags, and coffee grounds that can be turned into natural fertilizer by composting. Composting is simple, easy and saves landfill space. The natural humus created by composting improves soil structure by making it light and porous and good for beneficial insects like earthworms. Compost replaces synthetic and chemical fertilizers by returning basic elements and important minerals to the soil. You can make the difference by recycling kitchen and yard waste into compost and mulch.

### How to Compost

1. Build or purchase a compost bin. Compost bins can vary from simple chicken wire enclosures to recycled plastic bins. A workable size is about 3 x 3 feet. Check with your local agricultural extension agency as they sometimes give away or sell compost bins.
2. Place your compost bin in a warm sunny location.
3. Loosen the soil up and put down a layer of organic compost purchased from your local nursery or home & garden store.
4. Add equal amounts of kitchen scraps, garden trimmings and grass clippings (mix grass with coarse materials like small twigs to prevent compacting).
5. Do not put meat scraps, bones, fish, dairy, oils, cheese, plastics, metals, glass, or pet waste in compost bin.
6. To decompose your compost pile needs air, water, and nitrogen. Add water every couple of weeks in hot, dry weather, but keep a lid on the bin in prolonged rainy weather to prevent nutrients from leaching out. Keep contents moist like a wrung-out sponge.
7. Turn the compost every couple of weeks to aerate it.
8. Depending on the weather, your compost should be ready in as little as 6-8 weeks!
9. Use the compost in place of fertilizer around plants and trees.

For more information read [Backyard Composting](#) by John Roulac. Harmonious Press, 1992. ISBN 0-9629768-3-0



# NOAH'S NOTES

*Saving nature in your backyard*

## MULCH

The average yard contains enough waste from trees, shrubs, and grass to provide almost all the mulch you need.

- Create self-mulching areas under trees where leaves can remain after they fall.
- Recycle pine needles, grass clippings, leaves and twigs into mulch.
- If needed, supplement with alternative and recycled mulches like Eucalyptus and Melaleuca — do not use cypress mulch.
- Local power and tree companies, and municipal solid waste departments are great sources of free mulch. Just be sure not to use mulch from diseased trees.
- Place grass clippings in your compost bin or scatter them in your plant beds.
- Use a mulching mower.
- To control weeds and reduce water runoff, apply a 2 to 3-inch layer of mulch around trees, shrubs, and plants.
- Do not put plastic or fabric weed mats under mulch.
- Leave several inches of space around plant stems and tree trunks.

## How much mulch will I need?

Garden area size	Number of 2 cubic foot bags
25 sq. ft.	3 bags
50 sq. ft.	6 bags
100 sq. ft.	13 bags

- 1 bag containing 2 cubic feet of mulch covers 8 square feet or a 2' x 4' area
- 1 bale of pine straw covers 18 x 20 square feet
- 1 cubic yard covers 108 square feet or a 9' x 12' area
- 1 full-sized pickup holds about 2 1/2 yards and covers 270 square feet or a 16' x 17' area