



Composting

Where to locate the compost:

Somewhere that has contact with the earth, preferably a sunny position and well drained location.

What to feed the compost:

Recommended	Not Recommended
Anything that was once alive, food scraps, garden litter, soil, mulch, hair, coffee grounds, seaweed, flowers, garden clippings, vacuum cleaner dust, cardboard.	Human or pet excrement, dairy and meat products, chemicals.

Uses for the finished compost:

Potting mix (when combined with some coarse sand), fertiliser (spread under mulch layer above soil or around the drip line of trees) or booster for seedlings (add a little each time you plant out a new seedling).

Aliveness: A small ecosystem is created in the compost which relies on a variety of organisms.

Diversity: A broad diversity of ingredients will help balance the compost.

Aeration: A compost heap requires air to ensure an aerobic breakdown of its contents. Remember to **TURN THE COMPOST** about 2 times a week.

Moisture: A compost should be moist (not wet or dry).



The Ratio:

Two parts carbon (dead, brown and dry material) to one part nitrogen (alive, green and moist).

Trouble-Shooting:

Condition	Symptoms	Remedies
Too wet/soggy (anaerobic)	Unpleasant odours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn the compost more often • Ensure the compost is well drained • Reduce nitrogen content/increase carbon content • Build the compost heap with more coarse material, especially at the base
Too dry	Slow break down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you are not over turning the compost • Soak with water until it is moist • Increase nitrogen content
Unwanted visitors	Vermin, cockroaches or excessive flies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover the entire base and surrounds with chicken wire to prevent burrowing. • Ensure the compost is covered • Ensure the compost lid is held down firmly with a heavy object, such as a brick
Compost is too acidic, usually due to anaerobic conditions	Compost smells sour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a small amount of garden lime • Turn the heap more regularly • Build the compost heap with more coarse material, especially at the base
Too much nitrogen	Strong smell of ammonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover the heap with more straw or carbon rich material

References & Further Resources

The Watershed Sustainability Resource Centre, 218 King Street Newtown, 02 9519 6366

Taylor, D & Y (1993) *The compost book*, Reed New Holland, Australia.

Foster, C (2002) *Compost*, Cassell Illustrated, Great Britain.