**What is composting?**

*Compost* is a dark brown, earthy, crumbly material made of decomposed organic matter.

**Benefits of Composted Material**
When added to soil, compost improves soil porosity and water retention, and provides plants with essential nutrients.

Composting diverts organic materials from the waste stream and our landfills!

**How does Material Decompose?**
Millions of microorganisms work to break down organic material. We can speed up composting by managing the process.

**Contact us**
Maine Department of Environmental Protection
Sustainability Division
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**COMPOST IT!**
- Fruit and vegetable scraps
- Houseplants
- Green plant trimmings
- Weeds that have not gone to seed
- Coffee grounds and filters or tea bags
- Bread, pasta, cereal
- Hair
- Grass clippings
- Wilted flowers
- Dry leaves
- Hay or Straw
- Wood chips
- Sawdust (use sparingly)
- Dryer lint
- Dried grass clippings
- Shredded cardboard or paper (mix well to prevent matting)

**KEEP IT OUT!**
- Meat, Fish, Dairy products
- Fats, Oils, Peanut butter
- Mayonaise, Salad dressing
- Dog or cat waste
- Wood or charcoal ash
- Grass clippings from herbicide treated lawns
- Glass, Plastic, Metal, or Non-organic materials

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**Backyard Composting**

**Maine Department of Environmental Protection Guide to Home Composting**
How do I start a compost pile?

Start by picking a location. Look for an area that is:

- Well-drained and close to level
- In partial shade, to help with water retention
- At least 1-foot away from walls, fences, bushes, trees etc.
- A convenient spot to place materials and to get the end product to its final location

What tools will I need?

These tools may help get you started:

- Compost bin
- Pitchfork (compost turner)
- Chipper/shredder
- Wheelbarrow (for transport)
- Garden hose
- 4’ X 12’ Sturdy coated wire mesh (to form cylinder to contain compost pile, if desired)

Building the pile

Step 1
Loosen the soil where you will place your compost. You may also want to pile a 4” to 6” layer of twigs on top of the soil to encourage airflow at the bottom of the pile.

Step 2
Gather Your Materials
Have a shovel, pitchfork, and garden-hose ready to mix materials and add moisture as you build! You should have enough material ready to build a 3 ft X 3 ft X 3 ft pile. Or fill a 4’ tall by 4’ diameter mesh cylinder.

Step 3
Make a composting-sandwich! Starting with brown materials, alternate layers of ‘greens’ and ‘browns,’ mixing materials and adding water as you go. Bury food scraps in the center of the pile, and finish with a brown layer.

Step 4
You can add to a well-maintained compost pile year-round. Mixing the ingredients periodically with a shovel or heavy pitchfork will help speed up the composting process.

Step 5
Without adding new materials, your compost should be ready to add to your garden in about a year. Watching your garden flourish from the compost you have created is worth all of the work you put into it!