



GARBAGE CAN COMPOSTER

1. Drill ¼" holes, in the sides, top and bottom of a 32 gallon heavy-duty polyethylene or a galvanized metal garbage can. The cover must have a built-in locking mechanism or must be tied down. A metal unit is more impervious than a polyethylene one, but if the composting instructions are followed properly, the material you add will start to break down almost immediately, without generating odors. Animals will not be attracted to the bin any more than they would be attracted to a garbage can full of dirt.
2. Place the unit on bricks or cement blocks to allow for proper drainage.
3. Alternate layers of yard waste and vegetable and kitchen scraps with sprinklings of soil, finished compost or sawdust. **This is a very important step.** It is convenient to keep a container of such material next to the composter for easy access.
4. Fluff the material occasionally with a hoe or shovel to keep oxygen available to the decomposers. If an odor is noticed during filling, more air is needed.
5. Kitchen scraps and grass clippings generally contain a good moisture level, but leaves may need to be watered before being added. The material in the bin should be about as moist as a wrung out sponge. If it is too dry, the material won't break down quickly and if it is too wet, it will become anaerobic and putrify.
6. The composting time will vary depending on the time of year and the materials you add to the bin. Decomposition takes less time in spring and summer than in fall and winter. Food scraps and grass clippings break down more quickly than leaves. The material on the bottom will be ready to use first. (This could be 2-3 months in spring/summer and 5-8 month in fall/winter). When the older material (towards the bottom) looks like soil, it is finished. Take out the decomposed material near the top, and empty the rest in a pile. Let the finished compost age for a few weeks before using in your garden. Put the undecomposed material back in the bin and continue adding material as before
7. This system works well with two units. When the first bin is full, start filling the second. By the time the second is full, the contents in the first bin should be ready to use. The length of time needed to fill a unit depends on how many people are in the household. Because the material loses more than two-thirds of its volume as it breaks down, each bin can process a deceptively large volume of waste, in a household of 2 where the unit is used primarily for kitchen scraps, it can take over 6 months to fill.
8. Material can be added to the units during winter. Although it will not break down in freezing weather, biological activity will resume during warm spells and in the spring. The physical action of freezing and thawing also helps break the material down.