

# The easy compost fix-it guide

As composting is a natural process, it doesn't take much to work out the problem. Some solutions are listed below.



## Smelly compost?

If it gets too wet or if there is not enough air in the heap your compost can smell. A common cause is having too much food and not enough dry ingredients in your compost.

### Fix it

- ✓ Fork in dry leaves or garden mulch.
- ✓ Add garden lime, dolomite or woodfire ash to the heap to reduce acidity.
- ✓ Turn the compost to add air.



- ✓ Combine nitrogen-rich ingredients with sawdust or shredded newspaper before adding to the heap.
- ✓ Give your compost heap a 'floor' of planks to ensure good drainage.

## Unwelcome visitors?

Ants, cockroaches, mice or rats can sometimes make your compost their home.



### Fix it

- ✓ Always cover food with a layer of garden vegetation or soil – then cover heap with underfelt, hessian or polythene plastic sheet.



- ✓ Turn the compost to discourage ants and cockroaches.
- ✓ Fine wire under the compost bin or heap helps keep out mice and rats.
- ✓ Avoid placing dairy products, meat and seafood in the compost.

## Compost slow to mature?

A slow composting system can mean that the compost is not hot enough, or there may not be enough air or water.

### Fix it

- ✓ Add nitrogen-rich material, such as kitchen scraps or green garden vegetation.
- ✓ Turn the heap and add water.
- ✓ Cover the compost with insulating material in winter if it gets too cold.



Compost bins and worm farms are available from some local councils.

### For more information visit

[www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au)  
[www.livingthing.net.au](http://www.livingthing.net.au)

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# Easy composting

Create your own Eden

# How to use compost

Use compost as:

- seed-raising mix
- fertiliser
- mulch (apply up to twice a year on natives).



# What you can compost

Fruit and vegetable peelings, newspapers, grass clippings, weeds, tea leaves, coffee grounds, egg shells, old potting mix, dead flowers, human and animal hair.

**Hint** Avoid placing meat or dairy products in your compost until you are confident and experienced in making compost.



# 4 easy steps to great compost

## 1 Choose the site

Look for a site with good drainage and summer shade.



## 2 Compost ingredients

You will need:

- nitrogen rich kitchen scraps such as fruit and vegetable peelings and green garden vegetation such as fresh grass clippings, green leaves, weeds and manure
- carbon-rich brown garden vegetation such as dry leaves, woody twigs, paper and straw
- some water
- some soil or completed compost to introduce composting micro-organisms.



### Hints

- ✓ Use the lawn mower to chop up coarse garden prunings.
- ✓ Keep a bucket with a well-sealed lid in the kitchen to collect food scraps.

## 3 Layering

To build compost, start with a thick layer (15cm) of twigs or coarse mulch at the base for drainage. Then follow the A,B,C steps and repeat to build a heap layer upon layer.

- A.** Thin layer of kitchen scraps and green garden vegetation
- B.** Cover with a layer of brown garden vegetation covering all kitchen scraps
- C.** Moisten well

Repeat A,B,C.



**Hint** Sprinkling soil or finished compost on top of food scraps will make a richer compost and help reduce odours.

## 4 Maintaining your compost

Add air to the compost so it doesn't smell by turning it with a garden fork weekly or by placing garden stakes or pipes through the heap to allow air in.

**Hint** Cover your heap so that it is just moist, not wet. If it is wet or saturated mix more dry brown material through it and turn.

# Compost problems? Turn over for the Easy Compost Fix-it Guide

## Why compost?

Compost is natural and inexpensive and is good for the environment. By turning food scraps and garden vegetation into compost you can:

- **improve** soil quality and garden vitality
- **conserve** water

- **recycle** valuable nutrients and reduce the use of artificial fertilisers
- **prevent** greenhouse gas emissions and landfill impacts from wasted food and garden vegetation.



## Did you know?

- About half of what we throw into the garbage bin is food and garden waste.
- These materials can be used to make compost to benefit your garden.

