

Clean North Home Composting Guide

Revised March 2020



Turn your kitchen scraps and yard waste into nutrient-rich fertilizer!

What is composting?

Composting is a process by which you can turn organic waste into a nutrient-rich soil conditioner with the help of naturally existing bacteria, fungi, beetles, worms, and other organisms.

Why compost?

- **Reduce your trash:** Diverting organic waste like kitchen scraps increases landfill lifespan and reduces the tax burden.
- **Help the environment:** Methane gas is produced when organics break down in a landfill, and methane is a powerful greenhouse gas (much more powerful than carbon dioxide). Less organic waste going to the landfill not only reduces methane but also means fewer trucks on the road.
- **It's valuable:** Compost replenishes soil nutrients, improves soil and plant health, prevents erosion, and retains moisture.
- **It's easy/free:** Composting is not difficult...and why pay for commercial compost in a plastic bag?
- **Reduces chemical use:** Using compost rather than chemical fertilizers means less chemicals in your yard and our community's groundwater.

How to compost:

- **Choose your method** — you can use a store-bought or homemade composting bin or make a pile. Bins help contain compost neatly and deter pests (rolling drums are the most pest-proof). Having two bins allows you to have one batch cooking and the other taking in new scraps.
- **Choose a good location** — ideally sunny, well-drained, and easily accessed (but away from your house).
- Ensure your composter gets the **right amount of water, oxygen, nitrogen (greens) and carbon (browns; see reverse)**. Place a layer of sticks at the bottom to help keep the pile aerated.
- **For fastest decomposition**, turn often, chop larger scraps, alternate brown and green layers, and maintain a moist but not wet environment (like a wrung-out sponge). If your compost is too dry, add moisture (water, pickle juice, vegetable cooking water, etc.). If it's too wet, add more carbon-rich browns.

Continued

What can you compost?

Greens (nitrogen)

Fruit and vegetable scraps
Egg shells
Coffee grounds/tea leaves
House plant trimmings
Cut flowers
Fresh leaves and grass
Manure

Browns (carbon)

Dried plant debris
Dried leaves
Twigs/small sticks
Wood chips or shavings
Straw
Nutshells
Coffee filters

Not compostable

Meat and bones
Butcher paper
Dairy products
Cooking oil
Invasive plants/seeds
Human or pet waste
Tea bags (most have plastic)

Did you know...? Paper and 100 per cent natural fibres are compostable

Your household compost can receive more than just kitchen scraps. Other compostables include:

- Office paper/envelopes (no plastic windows), cardboard, newspaper, paper plates-towels-napkins-straws, tissues, toilet paper/tubes, egg cartons, pizza boxes
- Parchment paper (look for compostable symbol)
- Bamboo toothbrushes (break head off) and cutlery
- Toothpicks, popsicle sticks
- Walnut and coconut fibre scour pads, Swedish dishcloths
- Matches
- Silk dental floss
- 100 per cent cotton balls/swabs (no plastic sticks), facial pads, gauze
- Loofah/sea sponges/agave body mitts
- 100 per cent natural fabric (cotton, linen, silk, hemp, bamboo, etc.)
- Hair, fur, feathers, wool, nail clippings
- Urine

No plastic/chemicals: paper printed in coloured inks, glossy paper, receipts, plastic-lined cardboard food boxes, photos, stickers, parchment paper without compostable symbol, chips/shavings from treated wood.

How to reduce unwanted visitors:

- Only compost plant matter (no meat, dairy, fats, bread, rice, pasta).
- Cover new kitchen scraps with dried leaves/browns and use a lid.
- Wrap bottom of composter in quarter-inch hardware cloth or use a tumbling composter bin (example at right).
- Put your composter out in the open rather than near a fence or shed.
- Visit your composter more often and keep it moist.
- Remove piles of brush or lumber from your yard.
- Remove bird feeders or clean up spilled seed daily.
- **Bad pest problem?** Try not composting choice edibles (fruit/seed pods).



How to use your compost:

Finished compost should be dark brown with a pleasant earthy smell. The pile should not feel hot. You can screen out larger items and add them back into the compost. Use the finished compost as needed in your potted plants or garden or on your lawn.



Clean North

736 Queen St E, Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6A 2A9

info@cleannorth.org • cleannorth.org

Look for us on social media: @cleannorthsault

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