

Licking County Master Gardener Volunteers



Compost Happens It's nature's way of recycling!

Five Reasons to Make Compost:

1. Compost turns household waste into food for plants, hence the name "black gold."
2. Compost improves the quality of soil by improving the soil's structure, nutrition and biology.
3. Compost helps soil retain moisture and create a better root environment due to increased nutrients and air.
4. Compost makes soil easier to cultivate and resist compaction due to improved structure.
5. Compost adds nutrients including nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium in addition to micronutrients such as manganese, copper, iron, and zinc.

How to make compost:

Note: compost is a combination of organic matter, moisture, oxygen and micro-organisms (bacteria and fungi).

1. Find a shady spot, if possible.
2. Determine what compost system you are going to have (quick and hot - about 18 days, slow and cool - about 6 to 12 months, organized or lackadaisical).
3. Optimally, alternate layers of browns (dead leaves, branches, and twigs) which provide carbon with greens (grass clippings, vegetable waste, fruit scraps, and coffee grounds) which provide nitrogen. **DO NOT INCLUDE:** black walnut twigs, leaves and nuts, coal, charcoal ash (fireplace ash okay), dairy products, infested plants, fats/oils, meat, fish scraps, pet waste, or yard trimmings with chemical pesticides.
4. Turn the compost pile regularly. The more you turn it, the faster it will decompose.
5. Check the moisture content. The compost pile should not be too wet or dry. Water, if necessary.

How you know your compost is finished:

1. It is a dark brown, crumbly and has an earthy odor.
2. Individual items are no longer recognizable.
3. The temperature of the compost is the same as the outside air.
4. It is about 30%-50% of the initial volume.



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**How to use compost:**

1. Mulch flower and vegetable beds with compost. Think of it as a slow release vitamin.
2. Till compost into soil to improve soil quality.
3. Use compost in potting mixes (1/3 peat moss, 1/3 compost, 1/3 perlite).
4. Make compost tea by filling 1/3 of a bucket with compost, fill to the top with non-chlorinated water, stir several times a day for five to seven days), then use to water/feed plants.
5. Mix compost into soil when planting seedlings.

Resources:

<https://extension.illinois.edu/compost/process.cfm>

<http://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu/compost/>

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=444>

Tips for Watering Plants

1. Different plants in different soils need different amounts of water, but a general guide is that plants should have about 1" of water each week.
2. Strive to water infrequently and deeply rather than watering frequently in a light or shallow method.
3. Know your plants and look for signs that they need water. Are they wilting? Is the soil dry 3" down?
4. Soaker hoses and drip irrigation systems are recommended as they don't wet the leaves and the water goes directly to the roots.
5. If using a sprinkler, water in the morning so leaves are dry by night. Wet leaves invite disease. However, note that lawn sprinklers are not an efficient way to water gardens.
6. Create a basin around the base of each plant so water doesn't drain away.
7. The use of mulch helps slow evaporation and allows you to water less.

Resources:

<http://garden.org/ediblelandscaping/?page=201008-watering-veggies>

<https://extension.illinois.edu/hortihints/0108a.html>