



COMPOSTING SYSTEMS

Type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Slow outdoor pile	Easy to start and add to. Low maintenance	Can take a year or more to decompose. Nutrients are lost to leaching. Can be odorous and attract animals and flies.
Hot outdoor pile	Fast decomposition. Weed seeds and pathogens are killed. More nutrient-rich because less leaching of nutrients. Less likely to attract animals and flies.	Requires lots of effort to turn and aerate and manage the process. Works best when you have lots of materials to add right away, as opposed to a little bit at a time.
Bins and boxes	Neat appearance. Holds heat more easily than a pile. Deters animals. Lid keeps rain off compost. If turned, decomposition can be quite rapid.	Costs you time to build the bins or money to buy them.
Tumblers	Self-contained and not messy. Can produce quick compost. Relatively easy to aerate by turning the tumbler. Odor not usually a problem. No nutrient leaching into ground.	Tumblers are costly. Volume is relatively small. Works best if material is added all at once.
Pit composting	Quick and easy. No maintenance. No investment in materials.	Only takes care of small amounts of organic material.
Sheet composting	Can handle large amounts of organic matter. No containers required. Good way to improve soil in large areas.	Requires effort to till material into the soil. Takes several months to decompose.
Plastic bag or garbage can	Easy to do year-round. Can be done indoors. Requires no back labor.	Is mostly anaerobic, so smell can be a problem. Can attract fruit flies. Need to pay attention to carbon/nitrogen ratio to avoid a slimy mess.
Worm Composter	Easy. No odor. Can be done indoors. Can be added to continuously. So nutrient-rich it can be used as a fertilizer. Good way to compost food waste.	Requires some care when adding materials and removing castings. Need to protect worms from temperature extremes. Can attract fruit flies.