

Composting Solutions and C:N Ratios of Commonly Composted Materials

Composting is a beneficial way to reduce kitchen, yard, and farm wastes and can be a valuable source of nutrients when incorporated into the soil. Composting can be done using several different structures and in many locations. Regardless of the composting method, composting requirements are basically the same: air, water, and organic material must be added and proper temperatures should be maintained. Carbon to nitrogen ratios affect nitrogen release and should be considered before adding to compost. The charts below contain solutions to basic composting problems and carbon to nitrogen ratios of some commonly composted materials.

Trouble Shooting Composting Problems:

<u>Symptoms</u>	<u>Problem</u>	<u>Solution</u>
Bad odor	Not enough air	Turn pile, add dry material if too wet
No decomposition	Not enough water	Moisten and turn pile
Pile dry & warm only in middle	Pile too small	Add more wastes to pile and mix
Pile damp & sweet smelling but won't heat up	Lack of nitrogen	Mix in grass clippings, manure, or a little fertilizer
Pile attracts flies, rodents, varmints, & pets	Not mixed well; were meat scraps put in pile?	Mix pile & cover with soil; do not add meat scraps

Carbon:Nitrogen Ratios of Common Composted Materials:

<u>Organic Material</u>	<u>C:N Ratio</u>
Tree leaves	30-80:1
Grass clipping	12-25:1
Straw	40-100:1
Paper	150-200:1
Sawdust/Wood chips	200-500:1
Coffee grounds	20:1
Vegetable wastes	12-20:1
Cow manure	20:1
Horse manure	30-60:1