

<b>Materials to Compost</b>	
<b>Browns = High Carbon</b>	<b>Greens = High Nitrogen</b>
Ashes, wood	Alfalfa
Bark	Algae
Cardboard, shredded	Clover
Corn stalks	Coffee grounds
Fruit waste	Food waste
Leaves	Garden waste
Newspaper, shredded	Grass clippings
Peanut shells	Hay
Peat moss	Hedge clippings
Pine needles	Hops, used
Sawdust	Manures
Stems and twigs, shredded	Seaweed
Straw	Vegetable scraps
Vegetable stalks	Weeds*

\*Avoid weeds that have gone to seed, as seeds may survive all but the hottest compost piles.

### **Materials to Avoid**

- **Coal Ash** - Most ashes are safe to mix into your compost pile, but coal ashes are not. They contain sulfur and iron in amounts high enough to damage plants.
- **Colored Paper** - Some paper with colored inks (including newsprint) contain heavy metals or other toxic materials and should not be added to the compost pile (see [Heavy Metal Garden](#)).
- **Diseased Plants** - It takes an efficient composting system and ideal conditions (extreme heat) to destroy many [plant diseases](#). If the disease organisms are not destroyed they can be spread later when the compost is applied. Avoid questionable plant materials.
- **Inorganic Materials** - This stuff won't break down and includes aluminum foil, glass, plastics and metals. Pressure-treated lumber should also be avoided because it's treated with chemicals that could be toxic in compost (see [Safety Concerns Cut Down Treated Lumber](#)).
- **Meat, Bones, Fish, Fats, Dairy** - These products can "overheat" your compost pile (not to mention make it stinky and attract animals). They are best avoided.
- **Pet Droppings** - Dog or cat droppings contain several disease organisms and can make compost toxic to handle. (Can you believe the state of Alaska actually spent \$25,000 on a study to determine the effects of [composting dog poop](#)?)
- **Synthetic Chemicals** - Certain lawn and garden chemicals (herbicides - pesticides) can withstand the composting process and remain intact in the finished compost. Poisons have no place in the natural micro-community of your compost pile.

*From: [www.composting101.com](http://www.composting101.com)*

## Facts about Composting

*Compost Happens!* (Especially with a little TLC from you!)

What does it take to make compost? Well, you can start with what you have: food scraps and yard trimmings! But.....

- Yard trimmings and food scraps accounted for 25 percent of all Municipal solid waste created nationally in 2006.
- Out of the 31.1 million tons of food waste generated nationally in 2005, only 2.2% (.68 million tons) was recovered for composting.
- In 2005, 32.4 million tons of yard debris were generated nationally, and 62% (20.1 million tons) were recovered for composting.
- About 20 million tons of yard trimmings were composted in 2006, representing a five-fold increase since 1990.
- Organic material is bulky, takes up space in landfills, and produce methane gas that must be recovered or burned and produce liquids that contribute to leachate.
- Disposing of food waste in a landfill contributes to global warming. Every metric dry ton of food that goes to a landfill may generate .25 metric tons of methane in the first 120 days. Thus, composting this food waste would reduce emissions by the equivalent of up to 6 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.
- Grass clippings contain valuable nutrients that can generate up to 25 percent of your lawn's total fertilizer needs when left on the lawn.

### What can you do?

*Begin to notice all the organic matter you currently throw "away"! Notice your **coffee grounds**, **egg shells**, **apple cores**, **lawn trimmings** and **autumn leaves** going into the disposal or garbage can.*

*Create a compost pile of your own!*

*What will you need? Some **greens** & **browns**! "**Greens**" include anything that is moist and recently alive: food scraps, manures, grass clippings. "**Browns**" are that which are dry and dead: straw, fallen leaves, dead weeds, shredded newspaper. Following is a sheet of composting tips to help you begin.*

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