



## COMPOST...

- Changes waste into a valuable resource
- Reduces trash
- Supplies soil amendment
- Retains soil moisture
- Feeds the soil
- Reduces soil erosion
- Improves vegetable and flower yields

For information about state certified Master Composter Classes, call the Co-op at 972-524-0007

Composting information websites:

[www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl/compost.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl/compost.htm)

[www.attra.org/attra-pub/farmcompost.html](http://www.attra.org/attra-pub/farmcompost.html)

[www.greenpeace.org/usa/news/green-living-guide/composting](http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/news/green-living-guide/composting)

[www.epa.gov/compost](http://www.epa.gov/compost)

Environmental Co-op is Kaufman County's non-profit environmental organization dedicated to helping residents live well.

**Environmental Co-op**

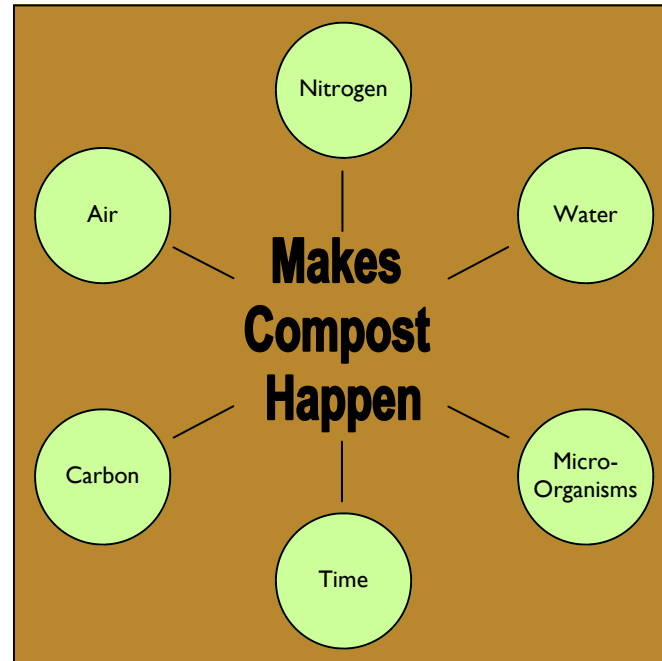
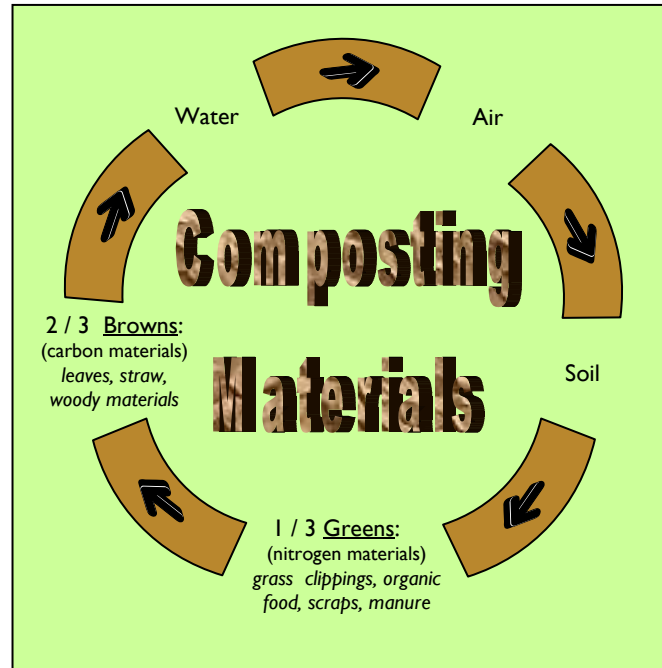
**401 N. Adelaide St.**

**P. O. Box 1833**

**Terrell, TX 75160**

**972-524-0007**

[www.environmentalco-op@cebridge.net](http://www.environmentalco-op@cebridge.net)



# BECOME A BACKYARD COMPOSTER

Turn yard clippings and household kitchen scraps into compost that will enrich your gardens and flower beds



prepared by  
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## Compost—Building Good Soil



**Bad soil?** Compost is the answer to nearly every bad soil problem. Whether your soil is very sandy, heavy clay, or farmed to infertile levels, compost provides the right benefits for healthy plant growth.

### Soil Benefits of Compost

- Saves valuable resources by reusing rather than discarding yard wastes.
- Increases organic matter in soils.
- Supports root and foliage growth.
- Helps sandy soils hold water and nutrients.
- Returns nutrients to the soil, including: phosphorus, potassium, nitrogen, carbon, and trace minerals that are released slowly when plants need them most.
- Saves landfill space.
- Attracts and feeds earthworms.

### Define Your Purpose

Is your objective to encourage plant growth, reduce water use, and improve your soil? Do you feel compelled to recycle waste material and extend the life of our landfills? Composting is the solution. Redirect yard wastes from landfills by returning the carbon and nitrogen rich nutrients back to the soil.

Making compost fits nicely into any lifestyle. If you are energetic and have the time, you can do a little extra work to help the composting process along. If, however, you are less concerned with 'when' the compost pile is ready, you can sit back and let nature handle the job for you.

## The Ultimate Soil Amendment

**Compost 101:** Very few plants will actually grow in pure compost. However, add a little to soil and your plants will never look back. By using your composted organic kitchen scraps and yard waste, you can amend your own soil.

### “Greens and Browns”

*Greens* and *browns* are the terms most of us non-science types relate to. The science types talk about nitrogen and carbon sources, but *green* and *brown* is easier for us to see, and it works most of the time. Your pile needs both carbon and nitrogen to work with about 2/3 brown and 1/3 green material by volume.

*Browns* include: dry leaves, straw, old hay, wood chips, and paper.

*Greens* include: grass clippings, weeds, kitchen scraps such as raw vegetable and fruit trimmings, and farm animal manures. (Do not use cat or dog manure and it is best not to include meats and dairy products.)

Combining these *browns* and *greens* with adequate moisture and air allows naturally occurring micro-organisms to break the materials down into materials that plants can use for new growth. Compost also acts like a sponge to hold water in sandy soils while providing space between clay particles to help keep clay soils from turning to “concrete”.

Earthworms feed on decaying organic matter, so compost supplies a ‘buffet bar’ of fine dining as well as moves nutrients into plant root zones and aerates the soil.

***“TAKE IT PERSONALLY!”***

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## Building Backyard Compost

A little planning can assure your compost success:

### Location

A container will help keep your pile neat, but is not necessary. Locate the pile, however, near a water source. A partially shady spot may be ideal so that you don't have to stand in the sun to build the pile.

If you want to work at it, you can have finished compost in as little as three weeks.

1. Build a pile of 2/3 dried leaves or other *brown* materials, and 1/3 *green* material. Running a lawn mower over the materials before it goes into the pile will help the process along. Add enough water so that when you pick up a handful no water runs off, but when you squeeze the materials, water runs. Have enough material to make a pile one yard high, wide and deep.
2. The pile will heat up over the next couple days to as much as 160° or more. After a week, the pile will have cooled down and should be turned. Turning is accomplished by moving the pile with a pitch fork or shovel next to the existing pile. Mix the materials up as much as possible in the turning process.
3. The pile will heat up again. After another week, the pile will have cooled down and the process is repeated. After another week, the compost is ready to use.

You now have a rich, fertile soil amendment to work into your garden, use as a top dressing on your lawn and flower bed or use in potting mixes for houseplants. And just think; you did it with stuff you were just going to throw away!