What does compost look like when it’s ready?

Finished compost usually settles toward the bottom of the pile and resembles a dark, rich, sweet smelling soil. Separate compost from the rest of the coarse material with a screen suitably sized for your needs.

How do I apply my compost?

Till in or top dress approximately 1” of the compost around garden or landscaping plants, bushes or trees. Apply as far out as the stems or branches extend. You can also mix it in with your house plant potting soils.

Although it is not a total solution to the solid waste problem, volume reduction clearly provides many opportunities to deal more efficiently and effectively with solid waste disposal. As existing landfill space is used up, disposal costs will climb. By reducing the volume of our waste through composting, we will conserve natural resources and at the same time reduce existing pressures on New Mexico’s landfill disposal capacity.

We would like to thank the following for their contributions:

Albuquerque Open Space Visitor Center
Bernalillo County Cooperative Extension Service
New Mexico State University

We would also like to thank the following for their contributions:

Albuquerque Open Space Visitor Center
Bernalillo County Cooperative Extension Service
New Mexico State University

Plant Science Department Cooperative Extension Service
New Mexico State University

What is vermicomposting?

Adding compost “Redworms” speeds up the compost process about 2 times and requires less turning of the pile. (“Redworms” are generally not the variety sold for fishing, however they are inexpensive and readily available.) Redworm vendors/retailers can be located at www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swb/compostingmulch.htm

How long before I’ll have compost?

Frequently turning your compost pile can yield finished compost in several weeks. Piles turned less frequently may take as long as a year to produce finished compost, so get some exercise and turn your pile.

BACKY ARD COMPOSTING
MADE EASY

Call (505) 827-0197 for free brochures, presentations, or workshops

New Mexico Environment Department
Solid Waste Bureau
1190 St. Francis Drive
P.O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502
(505) 827-0197
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This brochure is printed on recycled paper, naturally.

2009
Composting is recycling organic materials such as lawn clippings, vegetable scraps, leaves and other wastes into a rich soil amendment/conditioner.

Why compost?
You can create your own inexpensive soil amendment and at the same time reduce disposal costs.

Your kitchen garbage will smell much better without kitchen food scraps.

Less food scraps go down the disposal where water is wasted and septic tanks are overworked.

Your garden and landscaping plants will benefit from the nutrients in this soil amendment.

As opposed to most fertilizers, compost will release nitrogen over a longer time period.

Approximately 13% of the material in landfills is green waste and 12% is food waste, both segments of which are excellent for making compost. Instead of sending these wastes to the landfill, make them a gourmet delight for your garden or trees.

What is a good size for a compost pile?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3'</th>
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<tr>
<td>Not too big. Not too small. Just Right!</td>
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Where should I put the compost pile?

Shaded or sunny areas are acceptable locations, however, always cover the pile with a carpet scrap or a large plastic garbage bag to seal in moisture. The reason for most compost failures in New Mexico is that they are too dry. A nearby water source (faucet or garden hose) is a good idea to ensure your pile stays moist.

Hint: Top off your kitchen scrap containers with water each time you take it to the compost pile.

Will I need any special tools?

A shovel or a pitchfork are the only tools needed!

Some basic rules:

- Turn the pile approximately every 2-3 weeks to speed up the breakdown of materials.
- When building, turning or transferring compost to a new bin, wet each successive layer (approximately every 6" layer). This ensures that the compost is also moist in the center of the pile. Squeeze compost in your hand to judge moisture content. If the material feels like a damp sponge, its moisture content is sufficient.

What can I put in the compost pile?

- Add these:
  - Leaves, tree clippings (shredded), grass clippings, vegetable scraps, fruit wastes, coffee grounds (with filter), livestock manure (except pig), rabbit manure, paper, paper towels, *weeds.

- Do not add these:
  - Meat, bones, diseased plants, fat, oils, pet manure (cat or dog), milk or cheese (dairy products), **wood ashes.

  * If you are concerned about weed seeds, place the weeds in a black plastic bag in the sun for a day or two. The high temperature will kill the seeds. Composting will also decompose most weed seeds.

  ** Wood ashes are alkaline and increase the alkalinity of our already too alkaline soils.

I know the materials in my pile will be mixed up eventually, but how do I add them at first?

Layers should be approximately 6". However, it may not be possible to have 6" of ingredients such as kitchen scraps. In that case, simply add as much as you can.

Water after adding each layer. It does not matter in what order layers are added, since they will eventually be mixed together anyway.

Easy materials to use for constructing your bin (if you choose not to buy a commercial bin):

- Wood frame with hardware screen
- Four shipping pallets on end, wired together
- Straw bales (no nails, no screws, no wire)
- Concrete Blocks
- Wire fencing - approx. 10 linear ft. for a 3' diameter
- Compost heap
- Slatted multi-bin

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