## When is My Compost Ready?

It is important that your compost is stable before use. Finished compost will be dark, brown and crumbly with an earthy odor. The materials will be completely decomposed and the finished pile will have reduced by 50-75% its original volume.

## FAQ

**Q: Why does my compost smell like rotten eggs?**
A: There is an insufficient amount of air or too much moisture. Try turning your pile and add brown materials, such as sawdust or leaves.

**Q. Why does my compost smell like ammonia?**
A: There is too much nitrogen. Try adding brown materials.

**Q: Why is my pile decomposing slowly?**
A: Your pile may be too small, not enough nitrogen, lack of air or cold weather. Try turning your compost more regularly, add green materials, or insulate with a tarp in cold weather.


**Illinois**
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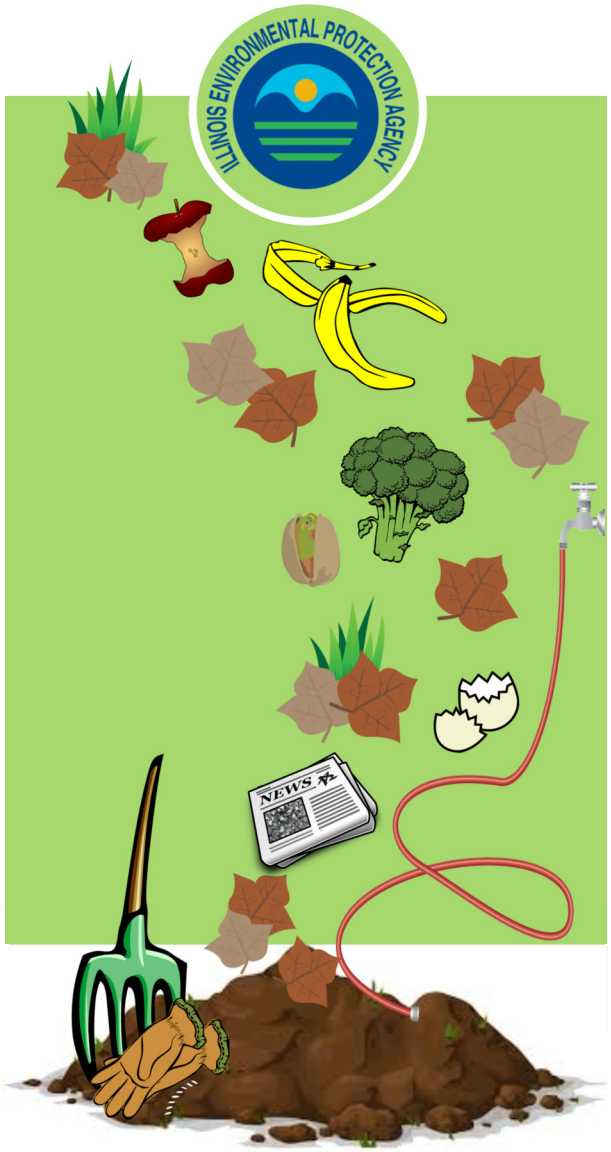
Composting Website: bit.ly/2VFVmvU

Follow us @ILEPA or
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

Source: U.S. EPA SMM Report

# Composting 101



## What is Compost?

Composting is the decomposition of organic materials. It's Mother Nature's way of feeding the earth. It transforms raw materials — such as leaves, grass clippings, and food scraps — into a dark, crumbly substance, a valuable natural fertilizer that is packed with nutrients.

Gardeners use compost to replenish the soil during and between growing seasons that yield large and organic produce.

### What About Compostable Plastics?

Typically, these products are composted at industrial type compost facilities. This material should be left out of your compost bin as most of these plastics do not break down in home compost piles.

## Why Compost?

Composting reduces the amount of waste you send to a landfill, improves the soil in your lawn and gardens, promotes healthy plant growth, helps soil retain water, and kills weeds.

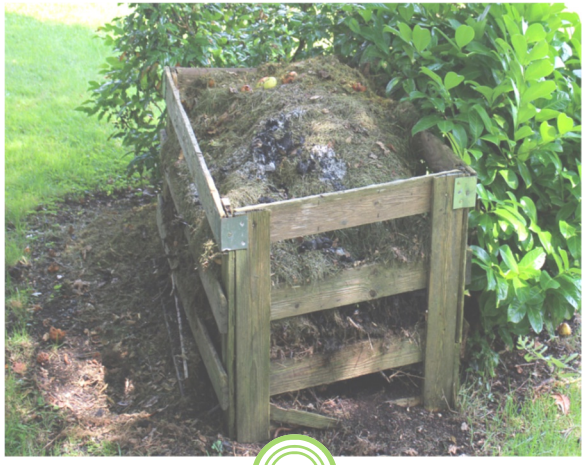
Composting can save you money by never having to buy fertilizer or bags for landscape waste again.

**30%** **of waste sent to landfills can be composted**

## How to Compost?

You will need brown material to produce carbon — dead leaves, sawdust or wood chips, shredded paper, coffee filters — and green material to produce nitrogen – grass clippings, fruit and vegetable scraps, lint, tea and coffee grounds.

Select a 3' by 3' dry spot next to a water source and add the brown and green materials in alternate layers. Keep the compost moist and occasionally turn your mixture. Ready to use once it is a dark crumbly texture!



## What's In

- veggie scraps
- coffee grounds
- dryer lint
- tea bags
- grass clippings
- shredded paper
- fruit scraps
- coffee filters
- egg shells
- nut shells
- saw dust
- straw & hay

## What's Out

- plastics
- fats & oils
- treated wood
- diseased plants
- colored paper
- compostable plastics
- meat
- pet waste
- dairy/cheese
- weeds
- stickers
- bones