

A recipe for compost....

Layer the following:

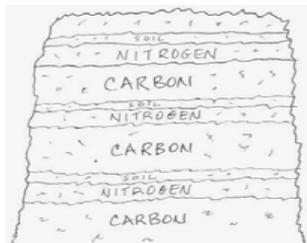
Carbon materials: things dry; like dried leaves, straw (not hay), dried weeds, pine needles, dried grass, shredded paper, etc.

Nitrogen materials: things wet; like manure, fresh weeds, grass or leaves, plus many kitchen scraps such as fruit peels, veggie cuts, dryer lint, coffee grounds, tea bags, hair, fur, etc.

Soil: introduces the living organisms that will do the work decomposing the pile.

Water: add as you make and turn your pile so that it is wet, but not soggy.

Air: necessary for the microbes, will be replenished when you mix the pile.



Layering is a good way to start your pile but then try to mix it often, moving the interior materials to the outside and the outer materials to the inside.



- Containers are optional but not necessary, just pile everything directly on the ground.
- Build your pile in a sunny location and cover it with black, 6 mil plastic.
- Avoid meat, oils, bones, processed foods, cat litter, etc.
- Check every week or two, and water as necessary.
- The more often you mix the pile the quicker it will decompose.
- Sift finished compost through 1/2 inch mesh screen and store in cans until you are ready for your homemade Gardener's Gold!

A few selected references:

The Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening, by the editors of Organic Gardening Magazine, and all books published by Rodale Press.

The Gardener's A-Z Guide to Growing Organic Food, by Denckla and Alcorn, 2004.

The Gardener's A-Z Guide to Growing Flowers from Seed to Bloom, by Eileen Powell, 2004.

Why organic? A few facts to consider.....

- There are roughly 80,000 chemical compounds used today but only 400 have been tested to see if they cause cancer.
- It is estimated that 4000 to 8000 chemicals now in use are likely to cause cancer.
- Women who work in the home have a 55% higher risk of getting cancer and/or chronic respiratory disease than women working outside the home.
- Over 2,000,000 household poisonings are reported annually with 60% occurring in children under 13 years of age.
- In the US, the average sample of breast milk contains over 100 contaminants.
- 25% of the breast milk supply is now so full of toxic substances it would violate federal food safety regulations if it were sold as a food product.
- From 1980 to 1994, the number of people with asthma increased 75%.
- Surveys show that up to 30% of Americans (88 million people) report unusual reactions (headaches, skin rashes, coughs, breathing difficulties, ringing in ears, and other health problems) to common chemicals such as those found in detergents, perfumes, solvents, pesticides, pharmaceuticals, and foods.



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Organic Gardening and Housekeeping

A guide to
maintaining a
clean home and
healthy garden
without harmful
chemicals



Inside....

Back to the basics!

Water: your safest choice; use warm water, except for protein stains such as blood, grass, etc.

Soda water: the extra carbonic acid creates bubbles which help eject stains.

Hydrogen peroxide: potent oxidizer and safe alternative to chlorine bleach.

Dishwashing liquids & castile soap: make great all purpose cleaners.

White vinegar & lemon juice: both are acids and can neutralize alkaline build-ups like soap scum and mineral deposits; mix with hydrogen peroxide to sanitize surfaces; vinegar, water, and a touch of dishwashing liquid mixed together make an excellent all purpose cleaner, especially for glass.

Baking soda, washing soda & borax: alkaline in nature with abrasive properties; will remove acidic stains like tomato, coffee, tea, etc.; dishwashing liquid and baking soda create a great paste for sinks, faucets, and counters; soak toilet bowl with borax to remove stains; will darken aluminum surfaces.

Tea tree oil, and many essential oils such as **lavender, pine or clove:** natural antiseptics for bacteria, fungi, viruses and mold; mix a few drops with 2 cups water and 2 tbs. dishwashing liquid for a pleasant smelling, all purpose cleaner.



Certainly there are many more uses for and combinations of these products; refer to the following books for more advice:

- *Naturally Clean, by Jeffrey Hollender; 2005
- *Better Basics for the Home: Simple Solutions for Less Toxic Living, by Annie Berthold-Bond; 1999
- *Least Toxic Home Pest Control, by Dan Stein; 1991
- *Herbal Housekeeping: Simple Recipes for a Naturally Clean Home, by Sandy Maine; 1999



A drop in the bucket!

If mice have taken up residence in your home try this. Set out a new five gallon bucket that has a little bird seed in it and a piece of screen on the outside; they will climb into the bucket but won't be able to climb out the slick sides. You can easily transport them outside, ideally some distance away! You might add a wet paper towel for water if you are unable to check the bucket often.

Outside....

Soil is alive!

Create and perpetuate healthy soil by regularly adding organic matter such as compost, leaves, pine needles, spent plants, grass clippings, sand, etc. Keep the ground covered with a thick mulch of leaves throughout the growing season, and alternate over—wintering your garden with a cover crop of annual rye followed by a thick layer of leaves the next winter.



You feed soil and soil feeds plants!

Soils that consistently receive a variety of organic materials should not need extra fertilizing. If your soil needs help there are many organic fertilizers available, such as blood meal, alfalfa meal, fish meal, pesticide free cottonseed meal, rock phosphate, bone meal and green sand. A mixture of seaweed or fish oil and water is an excellent liquid fertilizer for any plant.

Variety is the spice of life!

Insects are necessary as pollinators of many vegetable flowers. Encourage variety into your garden by including flowers such as zinnias, marigolds, and cockscomb. Also, interplant herbs such as basil, parsley, and mints. Know the few potential pests, look for them consistently and hand pick each one you see.

Insects are fascinating, fun to observe, and most are beneficial. A healthy garden will have lots of them!



Preying mantids are your friends!

Avoid many potential insect problems plus extend your harvest by starting seeds indoors.



Most common potential pests

- Flea beetles
- Cabbageworms
- Squash vine borers
- Squash bugs
- Squash beetles
- Striped cucumber beetles
- Spotted cucumber beetles
- Harlequin bugs



Timing is everything!

There are three planting periods here in middle Tennessee. **Early March** is when the spring garden is planted: lettuce, spinach, onions, radishes, peas, greens, kale, brassicas, carrots, potatoes, etc. **Early May** is time for the summer garden: beans, tomatoes, okra, squashes, melons, peppers, etc. and your flowers and herbs. A repeat of the spring garden can be planted in **September**.