

Wallsend Nurseries

95 Lake Rd Wallsend
Ph: 49 501066 Fax: 49 516960 Email: gardens1@tpg.com.au



Composting



There's a great deal of skill involved in producing rich , useful compost for the home garden.

As successful composting only takes place under ideal conditions it is a necessity to provide those conditions. Good compost produces a great deal of heat when rotting which kills weed seeds & breaks down the organic materials used rapidly into a useable rich black coloured final product. Bad composting produces no heat & a poor, weed infested final product with a low nutrient content .Most gardeners create either a slimy mess of improperly rotted material (often with maggots infesting it) or a dry mass of un-composted material.

The secrets to good composting are Aeration , Nitrogen & correct Ph . Ph is especially important as the bacteria don't work really well at low or high pH values . (How sweet or acid the mixture really is.)

Most plant materials are suitable to add to the compost heap but avoid Citrus skins as these rarely compost quickly & can contain excess acid which slows down the composting process. Avoid meat products as these don't produce good compost & are more likely to become maggot infested. Egg shells are ok though &, in fact, provide some calcium.

SO , HOW DO WE PRODUCE GOOD COMPOST ?? EASY!!

Compost can be produced by several methods. By far the fastest but most expensive is to invest in a "Compost Tumbler". This is basically a large drum suspended on a stand which can be rotated daily to tumble the contents & therefore provide the necessary aeration for the composting process to be successful. It's also fly proof.

Least expensive are the plastic "compost bins" available widely. These are not of much use really as they offer poor aeration qualities unless you are prepared to dump the contents at least weekly , fork them over thoroughly , & replace them in the bin. A good way to produce quality compost is to use materials such as grass clippings , kitchen waste (chopped up finely if possible) , animal manures & other garden waste chopped up. You can heap these materials & turn them over weekly with little trouble, or, of course use a compost tumbler.

Add a little lime to the mix (about 50 grams per square metre of material) & some Urea or Sulphate of Ammonia in the same quantity. You could even use some lawn fertilizer as a good substitute for the Sulphate or Urea!

This will provide the necessary pH & lots of Nitrogen for the bacteria which break down the plant materials.

Nitrogen is especially important if you use things like wood shavings or other hard to compost materials. Some people like to add poultry manure in large quantities as this also has a lot of nitrogen content. If this gets too wet the maggots will love it!! If kept a little on the drier side it's excellent.

SO, WHAT DO I DO?

Add only grass clippings, clean vegetable waste from the kitchen , egg shells , some lime or dolomite , no Citrus skins, some high nitrogen fertilizer, a little moisture & off you go!!

Don't forget to turn the materials often if in a compost heap (weekly or more often is recommended)

If in a compost tumbler simply turn the handle once daily.

If in a bin, dump the lot on a slab once a week & fork it over well , then replace it in the bin.

Under good conditions you'll have great compost in a short period of time.

Tumblers; approx 2 weeks.

Bins (excepting the Aerobin®) ; approx 12 weeks if kept well turned. If not it will take many months

Heaps: approx 3-4 months.

A great new way to compost is to purchase an Aerobin®. This is a fully insulated composting bin that provides superb aeration for the maturing compost. It is one of the best ways to produce quality compost easily.

Dig it in well & add a light dressing of fertilizer to the garden. We recommend "Organic Life Garden Food"® as a great addition to any garden. It's organic based & provides all the nutrients needed by most plants.