

# COMPOSTING SERIES



## How to Store and Handle Compost Materials

There are many reasons to stockpile compostable materials to use later. If your bin or compost system is full or inaccessible for a time, or if a wealth of material becomes available all at once, proper storage of these materials can set up the next batch for success. Materials should ideally be stored in a way that does not create odors, attract vermin or even combust!

### Dry Materials

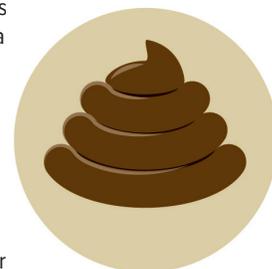
Dry materials, such as bags of leaves, cardboard boxes, wood mulch, piles of sawdust, shredded paper or bales of straw, often become available seasonally or all at once as a windfall. These carbon-rich dry materials can be stored for use in compost piles as needed. It's a great idea to have extra "browns" on hand to mix with kitchen waste, manure, grass clippings and other "greens."

- Keep brown materials dry to avoid them breaking down prematurely while being stored. A tarp or tightly closed plastic landscape bags work well to protect these materials.
- Keeping these materials dry also helps to avoid spontaneous combustion. Store materials away from homes and other structures and be sure to avoid any potential sparks or flames in the area.



This is also a great way to save these items attracting fruit flies or developing unpleasant odors.

- Manure can be stacked into a simple pile and covered with a tarp to keep it dry and reduce odors and the prevalence of flies. Fly larvae develop in wet manure. Store manure away from homes and structures.
- Grass clippings can be bagged with mower attachments or raked and bagged up. These clippings tend to be very wet and mold quickly. Grass clippings should be incorporated into the pile as soon as possible.



### Finished Compost

- Storing finished compost can be a good way to make sure that there is a constant supply for your gardens and plants to utilize. After harvesting and screening the compost, you can plan to store it for a short time or a longer period. The goal is to protect the finished compost from unwanted fungal growth, nutrient leaching and excess moisture that can cause anaerobic conditions, which kill off the beneficial organisms within the material.
- Short term storage (one to three weeks): For this short of a time, you probably won't face much deterioration if storing outdoors in an uncovered pile. For smaller amounts, you may also keep compost dry by storing it in open bags in a shed or garage, under an overhang, etc. A plastic tote bin with a loosely filling lid also works well for storing finished compost short term.
- Medium term storage (one to two months): Protect compost from rainfall and leaching by covering it with a weighted tarp or by utilizing a bin/bag system as stated above.
- Long term storage (More than two months): Store compost in a pile and be sure that it stays adequately moist to keep the microorganisms alive. This means periodic flipping to incorporate oxygen and moisture throughout the pile.

### Wet Materials

- Green" materials, such as food scraps, rotting produce items, grass clippings and manure, can be stored until adequate "browns" are available. It is also sometimes necessary to save them for later incorporation into the compost pile due to time constraints or adverse weather.
- Kitchen waste and rotting produce, fruit peels, eggshells, coffee grounds and other household waste can be frozen in plastic bags or plastic containers until ready to incorporate into the pile.



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