



FACT SHEET

Composting 101

Compost is a rich, moist dark soil created from decomposed organic materials such as leaves, grass clippings and fruit and vegetable scraps. Composting helps keep your plants and our Grand Traverse Bay watershed healthy.

Benefits of compost:

- ◆ Reduces the need for watering and fertilizer
- ◆ Enhances plant growth
- ◆ Balances soil composition
- ◆ Decreases landfill waste. In the U.S., each individual creates one to two tons of compostable waste annually. The EPA reports that nearly 50 percent of municipal waste consists of leaves, yard waste, food scraps and paper.

Items suitable for compost:

- ◆ Leaves
- ◆ Grass clippings
- ◆ Pine needles
- ◆ Small twigs
- ◆ Garden trimmings (from flowers and shrubs)
- ◆ Dead plants (pulled weeds, flowers, vegetable plants, etc.)
- ◆ Fruit and vegetable scraps
- ◆ Egg shells
- ◆ Coffee grounds

How to compost:

- ◆ Install a three-sided fence made of chicken wire in your backyard, dig a wide, shallow hole, or purchase a composter
- ◆ Mix 3 parts brown (dry leaves, dry grass clippings and small twigs for carbon), 2 parts green (fresh fruit and vegetable scraps, young weeds, and flower trimmings for nitrogen), and 1 dash of soil; then very lightly moisten with a fine mist, and mix well
- ◆ Mix the pile once a week with a hoe
- ◆ If the pile gets too stinky, add brown materials such as dry leaves
- ◆ Compost is ready to apply to the base of your plants when it reaches a consistency like moistened but crumbly chocolate cake mix