

# Types of Composting

**Cold composting** is as simple as collecting garden waste, or the organic materials such as fruit and vegetable peels, coffee grounds and filters, and eggshells to create a pile or fill a bin. Over the course of a year or so, the material will decompose.

**Hot composting** requires you to take a more active role, but the return is that it's a faster process; you'll get compost in one to three months during warm weather. Four ingredients are required for fast-cooking hot compost: nitrogen, carbon, air, and water. Together, these items feed microorganisms, which speed up the process of decay. During the growing season when garden waste is plentiful, you can mix one big batch of compost and then start a second one while the first one "cooks."

**Vermicomposting** is another type of composting that is made with the help of earthworms. When these worms eat your food scraps, they release castings, which are rich in nitrogen. You can't use just any old worms for this. You need redworms (also called "red wigglers").

## **What to Compost.**

- Fruit scraps
- Vegetable scraps
- Coffee grounds
- Eggshells (though they can take a while to break down)
- Grass and plant clippings
- Dry leaves
- Finely chopped wood and bark chips
- Shredded newspaper
- Straw
- Sawdust from untreated wood

Never add meat scraps, dairy, cheese, fats/oils, pet waste, or chemically treated wood. These items either cause unpleasant odours or could contain harmful diseases or chemicals.

## Compost Tea

Compost is loaded with all types of nutrients. And all of those nutrients are in their purest form, having slowly decomposed into a light, sweet smelling, humus-filled substance that many gardeners refer to as “Black Gold”.

From Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Potassium, to Calcium, Magnesium, Sulfate and more - compost contains all of the major nutrient players that plants need most for good growth and production. In fact, that long list of nutrients is exactly why compost is so good for adding into planting holes to help power plants.

But when you soak compost in water, all of those amazing and perfectly balanced nutrients leach into the water. And when they do, they create a liquid fertilizer that oozes with fast-acting, 100% organic power! Compost tea is so easy to make at home.

Begin by filling a bucket 1/3rd full of compost. It is best to use completely finished compost. Mature compost is best because its nutrients are completely broken down and will absorb quickly and more easily into the water. (Avoid using fresh animal manure)

If you don't have readily available compost, you can also use commercially bagged compost. The key to making a good tea is no matter what you use, make sure it is pure, 100% fully aged compost. Once you have the compost in the bucket, fill it with water to within an inch or so of the top of the bucket. It is best to use rain water rather than tap water which might contain chemicals.

Once you have filled the bucket with compost and water, stir up the mix for a few minutes with a stirring stick. This helps release the compost's nutrients into the water. The process is very similar to dunking a tea bag to release more tea into your drink.

Continue stirring a few times each day over the course of a five day period. Each time you stir, it helps to release more nutrients.

After five full days, the water & compost mixture will be charged full of nutrients and ready to go. To use, simply strain the compost mixture using a mesh screen or strainer. (Toss the used compost back into your pile to recharge) Your compost tea is now ready to use!

Fertilizing tea can be used on a wide variety of plants all over the garden. You can store the tea for up to a few months in a sealed container. When storing, simply place it out of direct sunlight and keep it capped to hold in as many nutrients as possible. This also will help avoid evaporation.

### **How to use compost tea.**

Compost tea is the perfect all-natural fertilizer for both vegetable plants and flowers. Apply every two weeks once transplants or seed crops have become established.

Water each plant well, it is fine to allow some tea to get on the leaves. This will help the plants absorb the nutrients through the foliage as well.

It's best to apply compost tea early in the day or in the early evening. Watering or fertilizing during the heat of the day can scorch plants with the sun's rays.

Compost tea is sensational for keeping container and hanging basket plants thriving too! Simply water with the tea every 5 to 7 days to give a small boost to plants all summer long. Do this in place of a regular watering.

