

Cold & Slow Composting

A low-effort compost heap for those who can wait

DIFFICULTY Easy

TYPE Ongoing system

TIME 6–12 months to finished compost



DIFFICULTY
Easy



TIME
6–12 months



COST
Low



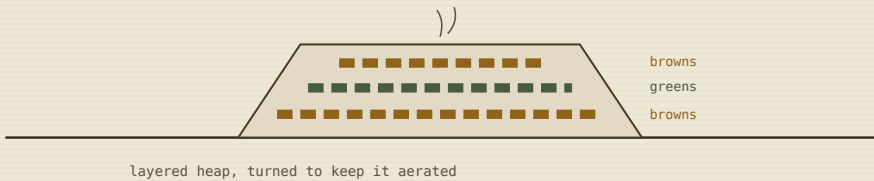
BEST SEASON
Year-round



FREQUENCY
Add as you go,
minimal turning

01 Add as you go

Unlike a hot pile built all at once, a cold compost heap is simply added to gradually over time — much less effort, at the cost of a slower breakdown and a pile that doesn't get hot enough to kill weed seeds reliably.



02 What you'll need

- A bin, bay, or simple heap area
- A steady supply of kitchen and garden scraps
- Occasional dry material (leaves, straw, shredded paper) to balance wet scraps

03 Method

- **1.** Choose a bin or a simple contained heap in a convenient spot.
- **2.** Add kitchen scraps and garden waste as they're generated.
- **3.** Mix in dry brown material occasionally to avoid a slimy, anaerobic pile.
- **4.** Turn occasionally if convenient, though it isn't essential.
- **5.** Let the base of the pile mature undisturbed; harvest finished compost from the bottom while continuing to add to the top.

04 Troubleshooting

- **Slimy, smelly pile** — too much wet green material; add dry browns and improve drainage.
- **Very slow breakdown** — normal for cold composting; be patient, or switch to hot composting if speed matters.
- **Weed seeds surviving** — cold piles don't reliably kill weed seeds; avoid adding seeding weeds if this is a concern.
- **Pests** — avoid meat and dairy scraps; bury fresh additions under existing material.

05 Timing & maintenance

BEST TIME	Can be started any time; an ongoing, ever-present system rather than a seasonal task.
DURATION	6–12 months for material added early in the pile's life to fully break down.
MAINTENANCE	Minimal — add material as available, turn occasionally if convenient.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS	The bottom of the pile becomes dark, crumbly, and earthy while the top is still recognisable scraps.

06 Tips & variations

PAIRS WELL WITH

Mulching

Building Healthy Soil

COMMON MISTAKES

Adding too much wet material without balancing browns

Expecting hot-pile speed from a cold system

PRO TIP

A two- or three-bay system lets one bay mature undisturbed while you keep adding to another.