

Hot Composting

Fast, high-temperature compost in weeks, not months

DIFFICULTY Moderate

TYPE Ongoing system

TIME 3–8 weeks to finished compost



DIFFICULTY
Moderate



TIME
3–8 weeks



COST
Low



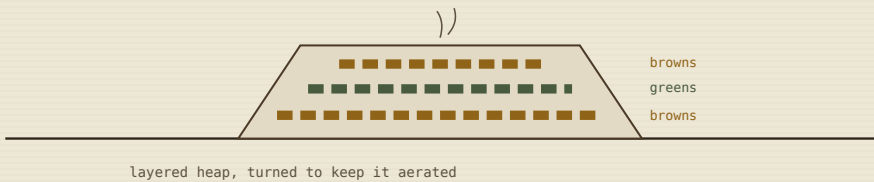
BEST SEASON
Year-round



FREQUENCY
Turned every few days

01 Layer browns and greens

A hot compost pile relies on a good ratio of carbon-rich 'browns' (straw, dry leaves, cardboard) to nitrogen-rich 'greens' (kitchen scraps, fresh grass), built as a large enough mass to heat up.



02 What you'll need

- A bay or bin at least 1m³
- A mix of browns (straw, dry leaves, shredded cardboard)
- A mix of greens (kitchen scraps, fresh grass clippings, manure)
- A garden fork for turning
- A compost thermometer (optional but useful)

04 Troubleshooting

- **Pile won't heat up** — usually too dry, too small, or too carbon-heavy; add moisture and greens, and ensure enough volume.
- **Bad smell (ammonia or rotten)** — too wet or too nitrogen-heavy; add more dry browns and turn more often.
- **Pests attracted** — avoid meat, dairy, and oily scraps; bury fresh additions into the centre of the pile.
- **Slow to break down** — pieces too large; chop or shred material smaller before adding.

06 Tips & variations

PAIRS WELL WITH

Worm Farming (Vermicomposting)

Building Healthy Soil

COMMON MISTAKES

Building the pile too small to heat up

Letting it dry out during hot weather

PRO TIP

Chop or shred material before adding — smaller pieces break down dramatically faster than whole stalks or branches.

03 Method

1. Build the pile at least 1m³ in one go, layering browns and greens roughly 2:1 or 3:1 by volume.
2. Water each layer lightly as you build — the pile should be moist as a wrung-out sponge, not wet.
3. Turn every 2–4 days to keep oxygen levels up and heat even.
4. Monitor temperature — a good hot pile reaches 55–65°C in the first week or two.
5. Once the pile stops reheating after turning, let it cure for 1–2 weeks before use.

05 Timing & maintenance

BEST TIME	Can be started any time of year, though warm weather speeds the process.
DURATION	3–8 weeks to finished compost with regular turning, versus months for a cold pile.
MAINTENANCE	Turn every 2–4 days during the hot phase; monitor moisture throughout.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS	Dark, crumbly, earthy-smelling compost with no recognisable original material, and no further reheating after turning.