

## Composting made easy

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I do not need to expound on why compost and I do not intend to try and rewrite a book on how exactly it works. What I have below is what works for me, I consider it real simple.

Fortunately the City of Tempe provide an easy start, a simple phone call will get an old trash container delivered on your driveway. They come with a few holes drilled in them. I add a few more and then cut a trap door near the bottom. I now have 5 compost bins.



Watering the compost is made simple by adding a drip line to a bracket above the composter with a small sprinkler head. It is tied to my hanging basket drip line. The idea is to keep the compost moist but not soggy!

Air / Oxygen is what is also needed. Again real simple. When adding material I try to provide air pockets through using bulky material, or even placing the half orange skins upside down. I have a steel pole that I poke into the compost pile once or twice a month. It takes me no more than 10 minutes to do all 5 bins. I also have a 2 inch tube which has some holes in it down the center.



Ingredients – everything from the yard and kitchen that can break down. NO animal waste or animal products. This year with the heavy frosts we have had an abundance of “brown” material, so I have collected it all and placed it in bags ready to be fed into the composters. I do the same with my lawn clippings “green” material when I have too much “Green”.



Layering is MOST important. No more than 2 inches of any one type of material. I have 5,000 square feet of lawn so in the summer it is very tempting to just poor all the grass clippings in at one go. Take the time to put a small layer then open a bag of leaves and do the same, alternating them. A bucket full of “dead heads” makes an ideal layer.

Temperature – Your compost is working well when the core temperature is about 60<sup>0</sup> F above the air temperature. So now mine runs about 100<sup>0</sup> F and in summer about 160<sup>0</sup> F.

Chipper Shredder – If you can afford one of these they make it easy to include some of the more woody material. I chomp everything up to 1 inch in diameter. Sometimes it is included into my composters but most of the time my chipper shredder material is used for top mulch on the rose beds.

When you start a new compost bin expect it to take 12 months before you get to reap the benefits. It is amazing, you keep adding to the top and it keeps going down!

Compost starters. I have used them occasionally. Do they work? I am not sure. I occasionally add some nitrogen when I am putting a little on my fruit trees.

Time to reap. I open the trap doors and shovel out “black gold”. This I do about every six weeks and it takes me about 30 minutes to gather from the 5 bins. Most of the time it goes right into the next flower bed or vegetable bed I am getting ready to turn. I now have a small pile of excess that is great when I am putting together another pot.

Flies – A few in the summer when you apply the fresh grass but they are gone in a day or two.

Roaches – a few in the summer but they stay out by the compost so I do not worry.

Worms – The bottom of the bins are full of worms, they work on the material after it has cooled down a little.