

# BACKYARD COMPOSTING EXHIBIT



The Garden is excited to demonstrate various types of composting and offers workshops on starting composting in your very own yard. We have an active Composting Team that not only keeps several compost bins “working” but also generates fresh, quality compost used right here in The Garden. Stop by when the team is working and they can answer many of your questions about starting or trouble shooting your batch of compost. The exhibit also has recipes for a perfect blend to help you create the best possible compost. Want to reduce your landfill “donations” or grow a healthier garden at home? Composting may be a perfect fit and It doesn’t even matter what size or type of yard you have. Let us show you how composting can work for you!

## Something for Everyone



“Worm Factory”  
Vermi-Compost Bin



“Garden Gourmet”  
Tower Compost Bin

Stacking tubs for vermi-composting (red wiggler worms), towers with slide-up access doors, tumblers on rollers with access hatches, and more—composting can be done anywhere! Why bother? Keeping scraps out of landfills helps conservation efforts and, even if you only have a few patio plants, they need fresh soil added on a regular basis. Over time, plants, especially in containers, deplete nutrients from soil. They need their vitamins, too! Large yards with fruit trees or other edibles, yield a healthier, better tasting harvest when composting is part of your gardening strategy. But first, select the right composting bin for you. Keep reading for more details on all the options, then check them out in person at The Garden. Tell us your composting needs and we’ll help you get started.

## BACKYARD COMPOSTING EXHIBIT (continued)



### VERMI-COMPOSTING (Worms)

Red wigglers (at garden centers and online vendors) eat kitchen scraps and their castings (excretions) blend with a bedding of coconut coir to produce nutrient-rich compost. Worm care is easy and they don't need a lot of room. A space about 2' x 3' by 3' high will do. They need full shade and added moisture to keep their "house" cool and damp. Troughs are formed in the coir bedding and diced scraps spooned into the troughs then covered with coir. Don't worry, the worms will find the food!



### WORM MENU

Some of their favorite scraps are melon rinds, avocado, mango, bananas and pumpkin. No animal products or waste. They also eat green leafy veggies like lettuce, but nothing tough and high in fiber, like artichokes, carrots or celery. Most fruits, except citrus, are great for worms. A special food for worms is egg shells once a month or so. They get calcium from the shells and so will your plants. Shells should be dried then crushed into fairly small pieces as they're harder to eat than fruits and veggies.



### WORM CASTING TEA

A bonus from vermi-composting is the by-product tea that can be poured out and used in your garden. Most vermi-composters have a spigot for the tea. The tea is a blend of broken down scraps, coconut coir and moisture from the worm house. The tea is not as rich as the castings, but is absolutely safe, will not burn your plants, and is easy to apply. Dilute it one part tea to ten parts water to stretch it and cover more of your garden. Just pour the tea around the base of your plants for a boost between compost amendments.

## BACKYARD COMPOSTING EXHIBIT (continued)



### GARDEN GOURMET

This tower bin is only about 2'x2' and about 3' high. But you'll need room to access the slide-up door at the bottom to shovel out the finished compost. Still, it doesn't need a lot of space and makes quite a bit of compost. The top swings open like a trash can for quick access or the top section can be removed to stir the top layers and add food scraps. Side vents allow airflow. This bin attracts worms from underground that climb to the top to feed. Compost and they will come!



### STACKABLE BINS

Stacking bins have an advantage in being able to access the entire batch when it's stirred. Each layer is lifted off and restacked next to the remaining layers. Then the batch is tossed from the old to new stack location one layer at a time. Absolutely all of it gets stirred every time. These also have side vents for airflow. It's easier to stir stacked bins than top loading towers, but on the down side, stackers *do* require more room. Although not intended for using worms, getting a few worm "volunteers" is not uncommon.



### LARGE WOOD BINS

Larger yards can use open-air bins which can be built from 2x6 lumber and 4x4 posts. Like all bins, these need shade. So, locating under awnings, umbrellas or shade trees is best. These bins dry out faster than closed bins, and need moisture levels checked often. Batches need to be tossed regularly, as with other types of bins, but not as often and it's easy to reach the entire batch with a pitch fork. This bin has a vent pipe (PVC with holes drilled) allowing for airflow to the center. Fresh airflow is needed every 18" or so.

## BACKYARD COMPOSTING EXHIBIT (continued)



### STARTING FRESH

A batch of compost needs air, water, 1 part greens (energy) and 2 - 3 parts browns (bulk). Greens, like grass or garden trimmings, and kitchen scraps, have a high nitrogen content. Browns, like paper, straw and shredded wood materials, have a high carbon content. Greens break down the browns and browns keep the batch from staying too wet allowing airflow to the greens. Enough water to make it damp but not soggy and it's ready to start "cooking."



### COOKING HOT

Compost bins using decomposition are called "hot" and they actually are. During the first week it's not uncommon for batches to stay around 120°. They're ashy, hot, and steaming when opened up the first few weeks. That's why they need to be stirred and checked for moisture to make sure they are not too dry or wet. Toss, add fresh greens and small amounts of water weekly to keep it "cooking." Kick start a new batch by adding a few shovels of completed compost and some healthy garden soil as accelerators.



### NATURE'S TREAT

After a few months hot bins yield a wonderful, nutrient-rich, compost to spread around your garden. It is a balancing act to keep the right amounts of greens, browns, air and water. But it's not rocket science. When done correctly, the experience is rewarding in more ways than you might think. You spare the landfill and create an organic material with your own two hands, and don't buy a commercial product in packaging. Plus, you watch your garden thrive. See? Getting your hands a little dirty isn't a bad thing after all.