

What you can and cannot compost-use common sense!

Things you can compost!

Materials	Carbon or Nitrogen	Details
Alfalfa meal and hay	Carbon	Shredding or chopping it up will help it break down quicker
Algae, seaweed and lake moss	Nitrogen	Good source of nutrients and minerals.
Apple pomace (cider press waste)	Nitrogen	If dried use as a carbon
Ashes (wood, not coal)	Neutral	Use only wood ashes since coal ashes can be toxic to plants. Use sparingly as a pest deterrent.
Banana peels	Nitrogen	Shredding or chopping it up will help it break down quicker
Beverages, kitchen rinse water	Neutral	Help keep the pile moist, but don't over do it.
Buckwheat straw or hulls	Carbon	Shredding or chopping it up will help it break down quicker
Cardboard	Carbon	If you have lots of this, consider recycling it. Otherwise, shred into small pieces in pile.
Cat litter (unused!)	Carbon	Ugh..make sure its unused
Clover	Nitrogen	Add it for a bit of luck!
Cocoa hulls	Carbon	Shredding or chopping it up will help it break down quicker
Coffee grounds (and filters)	Nitrogen	Great source of nitrogen and worms love coffee grounds! The filter will break down so add it too!
Cornstalks, corn cobs	Carbon	A little tricky, so shred and/or break down and mix well into pile.
Cotton Bur	Nitrogen	Great to use to jump start your pile or warm it up
Cowpeas	Nitrogen	Add them if you got them!
Dog food	Nitrogen	Best if not a meat based dog food
Dryer lint	Carbon	Yum, lint. Make sure you moisten it a little before you add it.
Eelgrass	Nitrogen	If dry use as a carbon
Egg shells	Neutral	These break down slowly, so make sure to crush these before adding.
Feathers	Nitrogen	Slow to break down, shred if possible to speed up

		process
Flowers	Nitrogen	Green use as Nitrogen, dried use as carbon
Fruit peels (not limes)	Nitrogen	Best if you cut them up to small pieces
Grape pomace (winery waste)	Carbon	When dried and shredded best used as a carbon
Green Grass clippings	Nitrogen	When green can be used as a Nitrogen
Dried Grass clippings	Carbon	Make sure they are not too wet and mix with dry leaves for best results.
Hair	Nitrogen	Good source of nitrogen. Make sure you scatter, so it doesn't clump.
Hay	Nitrogen	The best kind is hay that is not suitable for livestock and is starting to decay on its own. Make sure it is dry and weathered.
Hedge Clippings	Carbon	Shredding or chopping it up will help it break down quicker
Hops (brewery waste)	Carbon	When dried and shredded best used as a carbon
Kelp (seaweed)	Carbon	Good source of potassium (perfect for growing potatoes!). Use sparingly or sprinkle kelp meal in to get your pile cooking.
Leather (leather waste)	Nitrogen	Shredding or chopping it up will help it break down quicker
Leaves	Carbon	Shredding or chopping it up will help it break down quicker
Manure from herbivores (cow, horse, pig, sheep, chicken, rabbit)	Nitrogen	Best if known to come from a herbivore
Newspaper	Carbon	Shredding or chopping will help it break down quicker
Nut shells	Carbon	Shredding or chopping will help it break down quicker
Oak leaves	Carbon	Shredding or chopping will help it break down quicker
Oat straw	Carbon	Shredding or chopping will help it break down quicker
Sawdust and wood shavings	Carbon	Preferably <i>not</i> from kiln-dried wood
Paper	Carbon	Shredding will help it break down quicker
Peanut hulls	Carbon	Shredding or chopping will help it break down quicker
Peat moss	Carbon	Also great to add to your garden soil
Pine needles and cones	Carbon	Shredding or chopping will help it break down quicker
Tea leaves	Carbon	Best if shredded to help it break down quicker

Vegetable peels and scraps	Nitrogen	Kitchen scraps are a great source of nitrogen
Vetch	Carbon	From the pea family, yup add it too
Weeds	Carbon	Don't add if your concerned about spreading the seeds
Wheat straw	Carbon	Best if shredded to help it break down quicker

Things you should NOT compost!

Materials	Carbon or Nitrogen	Details
Ashes (coal or charcoal)	n/a	May contain materials that are toxic to plants.
Cat droppings/litter	n/a	These may contain disease organisms and should always be avoided for composting.
Colored paper		
Dog droppings	n/a	Same as cats.
Lime	n/a	High alkaline pH can kill composting action.
Meat, fat, grease, oils, bones	n/a	Do not break down, can coat materials and "preserve" them, can attract pests.
Nonbiodegradable materials		
Toxic materials		

Things that MAY be composted, but only with caution and skill

Materials	C/N	Details
Bird droppings	Nitrogen	Some bird droppings may contain disease or weed seeds
Diseased Plants	Nitrogen	Make sure your pile gets to at least 135 degrees Fahrenheit for a few days to let it "therma kill" the disease
Milk, yogurt, cheese	Neutral	May attract pests, so put it in the middle to deep into the pile
Weeds	Nitrogen	For best results, dry them out until crunchy, then add them to your compost pile
Sod	Nitrogen	Like diseased plants, make sure your pile gets hot enough to make sure the grass doesn't keep growing in your pile.

Troubleshooting a Backyard Compost pile/bin

Symptom	Problem(s)	Solution(s)
The pile smells bad	Not enough air OR too much moisture	Turn the pile if not enough air Add dry materials if too moist
The pile will not heat up	Not enough moisture OR Pile size is too small OR Lack of nitrogen-rich material OR Particle size is too big	Add water if dry Build pile to at least 3' x 3' x 3' Mix in grass clippings or fruit/vegetable scraps Chip or grind materials
The pile attracts flies, rodents, or pets	Pile contains bones, meat, fatty or starchy foods, or animal manure	Alter materials added to pile; bury fruit/vegetable scraps in the middle of the pile, or under 8" to 10" inches of soil, or compost them in a worm bin.
Pile has slugs in it (and so does garden)	Pile is easily accessible and provides daytime hiding place and breeding ground for slugs	Remove slugs and slug eggs from pile (eggs look like very small clusters of pearls). Locate compost pile far from vegetable gardens and/or create barriers around pile/garden (for example, traps and copper flashing).

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