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FACTSHEET

HOME COMPOSTING

December 2024



Why Should I Compost?



Convert your yard, plantation, or kitchen "waste" into a **valuable and nutrient rich soil**. Compost has many benefits for the Pacific's sandy atoll or thick volcanic soils.



Have **cleaner and less smelly rubbish bins**, less attractive to dogs, cats, rats and insects



Save money - converting organic material to compost will save your family **almost half on pre-paid bags** or waste collection and **reduce need to purchase imported fertilizers**

What Can I Compost?

Organics are materials that were **once part of a living thing**. All organic materials contain **Carbon and Nitrogen** - compost piles need an even amount of both

Carbon

Old, rigid, & dry



Palm & Flax



Coconut Husks



Paper & Cardboard



Sawdust

Nitrogen

Fresh, flexible, & moist



Food / Market



Copra



Fish



Animal Manure

Neutral

Mixture / Both



Plantation / Harvest



Yard / Community



Weeds



Cooking Fire Ash

How Do I Compost?



Step 1 – Make a Compost Bin

Compost bins can be made using a variety of items – many of which may be considered “waste materials” themselves (so you can save them from landfill!)

Keep in mind:

- Make sure it is **big enough** - you might need two or three?
- Compost will need oxygen (air flow) - make sure your bin is **not completely sealed**
- Too much water will impact compost - a **cover is recommended** during times of rain
- Compost **needs to be turned regularly** - make sure you have another bin or space to turn material into
- **Secure from animals** - dogs, pigs, cats, and rats
- Untreated timber will rot in the composting environment - you may **need to replace** regularly (they can be added to the compost!)
- Car tyres and chemical drums may have **residual contaminants** - which may not be suitable for use to construct a compost bin.



Step 2 – Add Materials (ensuring Food, Air, & Water)

Composting mimics nature’s method of decomposition, where creatures too small to see (microbes) process organic materials and convert it to a nutrient rich product, “compost”.

Microbes, like humans and animals, **need three elements to live and thrive: Food, Water, & Air**

To build your compost pile, add organic materials daily (or as they are received), providing best Food, Water, and Air conditions for the microbes:

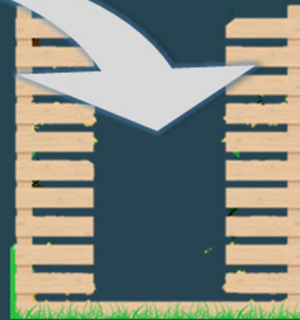
Food  	Your compost will need a carbon to nitrogen ration of 30:1. To achieve this ratio, follow this simple rule: Layer One bucket “nitrogen” material with one bucket “carbon” material, until your compost bin is full.  +  <i>“Neutral” items containing both carbon & nitrogen can be added without layering.</i> 
Water	Add water to ensure your compost pile is damp - it should not dry out, but not be too wet. Keep protected against too much rain. Your compost pile should be damp all the way though . See the next page for how to test the moisture. 
Air 	Your compost pile should contain a mix of small and large items, up to 1-5cm diameter, allowing airflow into the compost . Your compost should be turned approximately 2-4 weekly to add oxygen into the pile .

Step 3 – Process Your Compost

1. Add organic material to your compost bin daily (or as they are received), providing best Food, Water, and Air conditions.



2. Once the first bin is full, or approximately every 2-4 weeks, turn the material into another bin or pile and start the process again



3. Create a **maturation pile** where material turned from the compost bins can continue the composting process until ready for use

4. Complete daily “**self assessment**” checks on your compost bin and maturation pile (see page 4)



Using Your Compost

In approximately 4-6 months you should be able to use your compost.

Finished compost will be dark, smell & look “earthy”, and the temperature will be stable.

How to use your compost?

- Mix with garden beds to improve the soil quality
- Use at the base of trees and shrubs
- Use as a soil conditioner when planting seedlings (fill the hole with half compost and half soil)



For more information and extra reading, please visit

www.pacwasteplus.org/resources

Or contact the PacWastePlus team at pacwasteplus@sprep.org



Completing Food, Water, & Air Self Assessments

Complete daily "self-assessment" checks on your compost bin and maturation pile to assess whether the **Food, Water, & Air** are correct, and the composting process is effective.

Undertake the following:

1. Visually inspect the pile



does it look?

dry & crispy

loose, mixed sizes

wet & soggy, clumped

2. Squeeze a handful



does it feel?

dry & crispy

Moist (but not too wet)

wet & soggy

3. Measure temperature (with a probe or blade*)



does it feel?

cool
< 45°C / 115°F

warm
~55°C / 130°F

hot
> 65°C / 150°F

* insert the blade of a clean shovel or machete into the pile for 30 seconds. Bring it out and touch with your hand.

4. Carefully smell



does it smell?

like nothing

good like "earthy"

"bad" like rotten egg

Actions Needed?

Undertake the following actions if any issues are identified:

any Brown?

May need:



1: Add Water

2: Add "nitrogen"

all Green?

No action needed

any Red?

May need:



1: Turn Pile

2: Add "carbon"