

Kids IN THE Garden

UF | IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



~ Composting ~

Small Scale Counter Composter

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Hi Kids!

You have heard about composting for the garden. Let us explore what it is and how it is a benefit for healthy soil and plants.

COMPOST — “Compost is a dark, crumbly material created when microorganisms break down organic matter such as leaves, grass clippings, and kitchen waste.” (UF/IFAS EDIS 10655) Compost will provide healthy nitrogen and carbon nutrients for your garden naturally. Plant food for you plants!



Figure 1. Credit: Daniel Nel/Stock/Thinkstock

To start your compost you will need to layer green and brown materials. Green materials providing nitrogen are considered as kitchen vegetable and fruit scraps scraps, egg shells and grass clippings. Brown materials for carbon are fallen leaves, twigs, paper and coffee grounds as an example.

Do not add any meat fish or dairy products. You will also not add animal waste or any weeds that have set seeds.

FUN QUESTION: How long before I have compost for my garden?

Compost can be ready in as few as six weeks if you keep it moist and turn it. It will heat up the first week than cool down and repeat. This is from the microorganisms doing their job to break down the green and brown materials.

Turn the page to see how our Counter Compost project progresses . . .

Composting on a Small Scale

To Start — Use a coffee can or small bucket with a tight fitting lid.

Compost
Kitchen Scraps
A Garden Friend!



Photo: K. Bentz, Extension Program Assistant, UF/IFAS Extension Service Martin, 4-H

Take note when reading the UF/IFAS EDIS articles on what natural materials are acceptable to compost.

Green Materials - Nitrogen: Most plant based kitchen scraps and egg shells are a good start.

Remember: NO meat or dairy products.

Brown Materials - Carbon: Fallen leaves, twigs, coffee grinds, tea bags, and paper: napkins, coffee filters, etc.

Remember: NO animal waste or weeds with seeds.



Photo: K. Bentz

As you add your materials you will want to layer your scraps, starting with the green materials then brown. Add a few layers and sprinkle in soil too. As your counter composter fills you can rotate or give it a shake. To prevent leaking add another lid to the bottom of coffee can. Just remember which side is up! Occasionally, I set my can outside for some additional heat to get those microorganisms going!

In about six weeks you will have healthy compost to add to your garden, raised beds or container plantings.

Check out the flyers on a Cucumber Trellis, Turnip Terrariums, Soap Deterrent and other fun **Kids in the Garden** activities, along with the Global Gardening plant sheets. **Enjoy your time growing in the garden!**

Email some pictures of your Creative Composter to: martin@ifas.ufl.edu

Big & Small: Compost Ideas for the Garden

Barrel

Bucket

Pallets

Crates

Chicken/Fence Wire



<https://gardens.theownerbuildernetwork.co/diy-compost-bin-ideas/>

Garbage Can

Fence Panels

Old Toy Box

Storage Container

Recycled Lumber



<https://morningchores.com/how-to-build-a-compost-bin/>

Get Composting Creative!

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Lesson Presentations, created by K. Bentz UF/IFAS Extension Service Martin, June 2020

References

Photos: K. Bentz, UF/IFAS Extension Service Martin, 4-H
<https://gardens.theownerbuildernetwork.co/diy-compost-bin-ideas/>
<https://morningchores.com/how-to-build-a-compost-bin/>
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