



## Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District

Creating Conservation Solutions for Over 70 Years

# Backyard Conversation Connecting Community + Conservation

*Welcome to the Backyard Conversation! Each month we'll be sharing a conservation topic from a more personal viewpoint for our readers. To make this successful, I want to hear feedback from you! I'll include a poll at the bottom regarding our topic and share links to some of our partner organizations with similar messages. So, let's get to it!*

## Composting 101 Properly Managing Food & Yard Waste

### Why Should You Compost?

To put it simply, composting is cheap, easy, and rewarding. It takes food and yard waste, and turns it into rich, organic soil. Recycling food scraps and yard trimmings keeps them out of our waste footprint and allows landfills to last longer. Our friends at [SWACO](#) have done an amazing analysis of our current landfill. In Franklin County alone, over a million pounds of food waste enters the landfill every single day from residential and commercial sources. Without massive changes, it's estimated our current landfill will be completely full in only 43 years. What does that mean for you? It means a new landfill will be necessary, which = \$\$\$, money. So, we really need to invest the time and effort into fixing this problem sooner rather than later.

### How Composting Works - Yes, you can do it!

If left alone, all organic material will eventually decompose. Composting is a natural process by which any organic material, such as food waste or lawn trimmings, is broken down by decomposing organisms such as bacteria, fungi, worms and sow bugs. These organisms need four elements to carry out their mission: nitrogen, carbon, water and air. Provide them with a diet of "green", moist materials rich in nitrogen (like grass clippings and kitchen scraps) and "brown", dry materials rich in carbon (like dried leaves, paper, and small twigs) and let nature take its course.

### Benefits of Composting

Healthy, fertile soil equals healthy, productive plants. So if you're looking to add some nourishment to your native landscaping, compost has numerous benefits for your garden:

- Reduces waste
- Improves soil structure
- Helps reduce stormwater runoff
- Improves plant growth
- Reduces the need for chemical



fertilizers

- Suppresses plant diseases and pests

## How & What Can I Compost

There are many different ways to make a compost pile; purchase a compost bin or tumbler, create a DIY area in your yard dedicated to compost, or compost with worms with a vermicomposter. Helpful tools include pitchforks, square-point shovels, an aerator, thermometer, and watering can or hose. Regular mixing or turning of the compost and some water will help mix the materials and add oxygen, speeding up the compost process.

## “Greens” & “Browns” What Goes?

To grow and multiply, composting organisms need 4 things:  
**Carbon (browns), Nitrogen (greens), Oxygen, and Moisture**

### “Browns” : bulky, tough, dry, fibrous materials provide carbohydrates

Carbon “browns” provides the energy food for microorganisms



Shredded leaves break down faster



Colored paper no longer contains toxic metals and it's ok to use!

- ✓ Leaves
- ✓ Shredded straw (weathered first)
- ✓ Sawdust (untreated)
- ✓ Woody plant trimmings, chips, & twigs
- ✓ Shredded paper\*
- ✓ Nut shells (slow to decompose)
- ✓ Corn stalks and cobs (slow to decompose)
- ✓ Brown paper bags
- ✓ Toilet paper and paper towel rolls
- ✓ Cereal boxes\*
- ✓ String/cotton thread
- ✓ Wool
- ✓ Paper towels.

### “Greens” : fresh, colorful, wet materials provide protein (nitrogen)

Nitrogen “Green” materials provide protein to break down the carbon food

- ✓ Kitchen scraps (veggies, fruit rinds, grain products, old bread)
- ✓ Coffee grounds
- ✓ Tea bags/leaves
- ✓ Fresh grass clippings
- ✓ Other garden waste (plants, stalks, flowers)
- ✓ Chicken/livestock manure
- ✓ Corn husks
- ✓ Cut flowers
- ✓ Sod (great insulator- place roots up)
- ✓ Herbivorous animal bedding (hamsters, rabbits, guinea pigs, gerbils)
- ✓ Feathers, hair, & fur
- ✓ Regional by-products (apple mash from cider factories, spent hops from microbreweries, grape skins from wineries)
- ✓ Shredded hay (weathered first)



Bury and cover food scraps to deter rodents



Eggshells add calcium to your compost!



A little weathered is best



Apply in moderation. Coffee grounds are acidic

**Don't fret too much about the carbon to nitrogen ratio. A good rule of thumb is to add 3 parts carbon-rich material to 1 part nitrogen-rich material, and turn every few weeks. You'll find what works for you!**

# FUN FACTS

- The average person throws away nine times their own body weight in waste every year. Composting can clean contaminated soil, lessens the amount of waste in landfills which minimizes the production of harmful greenhouse gases like methane, and reduces your carbon footprint.
- Want bigger produce, prettier flowers, and a healthier garden at no extra cost to you? Start saving your family's scraps and turning them into "plant food." Composting doesn't have to be complicated and is easy to do right in your own home. Check out this [composting infographic](#) from our friends at SWACO for all the goods on how to get started.
- Most local communities provide curbside collection of yard waste to their residents. To participate in one of these programs, residents should put yard waste in biodegradable paper bags, available at most grocery and hardware stores, or place it in a container clearly marked "yard waste" and set it on the curb. Contact your local community to find out the collection day and other details of your local program.

**Turn Your Yard Waste into Compost.**  
**Franklin County's Curbside Pick-Up Program**

It all starts with YOU!

ACCEPTED			NOT ACCEPTED	
 Leaves	 Grass Clippings		 No Food/Pet Waste	 No Dirt or Rocks
 Shrubs	 Weeds & Brush	 Twigs	 No Plastic Bags or Bottles	 Don't Use Plastic Bags Keep It Loose or Use Compostable Bags

For questions & information on proper yard waste composting, visit [SWACO.org/YardWaste](http://SWACO.org/YardWaste)

**SWACO**  
FROM WASTE TO RESOURCES

[www.swaco.org/200/Yard-Waste](http://www.swaco.org/200/Yard-Waste)

## Videos

Below: SWACO's Education Specialist teaches the basics of composting



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## POLL TIME

Has this encouraged you to start composting?

**Yes! Ready to get started**

Select

.....

**Ehhh, probably not but good try**

Select

.....

**Maybe- I need more information/incentive**

Select

.....

**I already am a professional composter!**

Select

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## Next Month

June- Doggy Doo's & Don'ts. Remember to PUP (Picking Up Poop) for a Healthy Community!

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STAY CONNECTED  
to your Soil and Water District!