

WHY SHOULD I COMPOST?

First, it's easy. Second, by using compost you return organic matter to the soil in a useable form. Humus in the soil improves plant growth by:

- controlling weeds
- helping breakdown heavy clay soils,
- adding water and nutrient-holding capacity to sandy soil, and
- adding essential nutrient to any soil.
- suppressing root-damaging soil organisms.

Rich organic soil helps produce healthy plants. Healthy plants help clean our air and conserve our soil.

Composting cuts down on your household garbage by recycling organic materials. In fact, if you're composting kitchen and yard waste in addition to recycling newspaper, bottles and cans, you're cutting your waste almost in half!

If all your neighbours did this too, it would dramatically reduce the amount of household garbage that's choking our landfill sites.



WHAT CAN I COMPOST?

One-third of your household garbage can be composted! Yard wastes such as fallen leaves, grass clippings, weeds before they seed, and the remains of disease-free garden plants make excellent compost.

You can also compost kitchen scraps such as fruit and vegetable peels and trimmings, egg shells, coffee grounds & filters, and tea bags. *Don't* compost meat, bones or fatty foods such as cheese, salad dressing or leftover cooking oil, as they may attract pests.

Do

YARD WASTE

Leaves
Dry grass
Weeds
Garden plants
Soft plant stems

KITCHEN WASTE

Fruit and vegetable matter
Egg shells (crushed)
Tea bags, coffee grounds and filters

DON'T

Meat, fats, bones, fish
Dairy products
Cooking oil
Wet grass

No single layer of material should be greater than six inches thick

HOW DO I COMPOST?

The composting process requires:

- organic material
- moisture
- air
- soil (optional)

The GardenOz™ Composter creates rich compost when you alternate layers of organic waste, keep the material moist and aerate it. It is helpful, although not essential, to add 15mm (1/2") layers of soil which contribute micro-organisms to the pile.

The GardenOz™ Composter performs most efficiently and effectively when you follow these suggestions:



Chop waste into smaller bits.



To accelerate composting, begin with a layer of nutrient-rich material such as your own finished compost, bone meal or a commercial starter (available at garden centres).



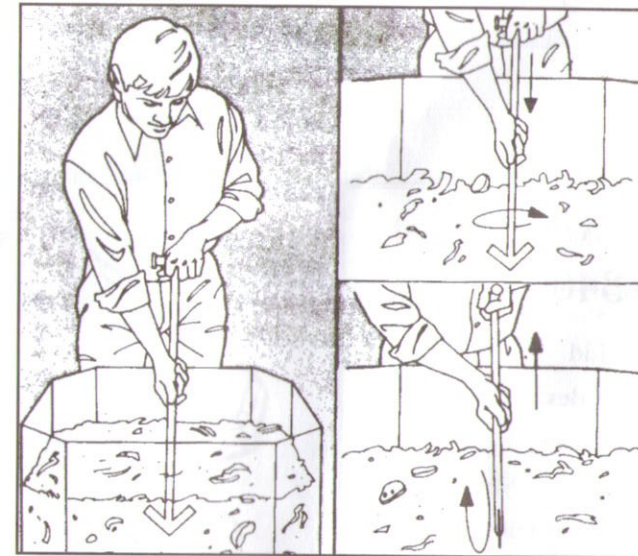
Continue to layer kitchen waste, yard waste and soil until the Composter is full. It's important to use materials with a high carbon content such as leaves, as well as materials with a high nitrogen content such as kitchen scraps and grass clippings. For more details, see page 12.



Keep the material as moist as a squeezed-out sponge. Occasional watering may be required to moisten the pile if it becomes too dry.



Turn the material (at least four or five times during the summer) with a pitchfork, shovel or compost turner so it's well aerated. You can turn the pile once a week but more frequent turning will inhibit composting.



Remove finished compost through the convenient doors at the base of the GardenOz™ Composter.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO MAKE COMPOST?

This will vary. It will depend on the size of your kitchen and yard wastes, moisture of material and the outside temperature.

With a GardenOz™ Composter, finished compost can be produced in as little as two months.

WILL IT SMELL?

A compost pile that is working well should not have an unpleasant odour, unless the material is too wet or too compacted. Turn the pile to allow it to dry out a bit and to ensure that it is well aerated. Adding dry organics such as autumn leaves can help absorb excess moisture.

HOW TO ASSEMBLE YOUR GARDEN OZ™ COMPOSTER

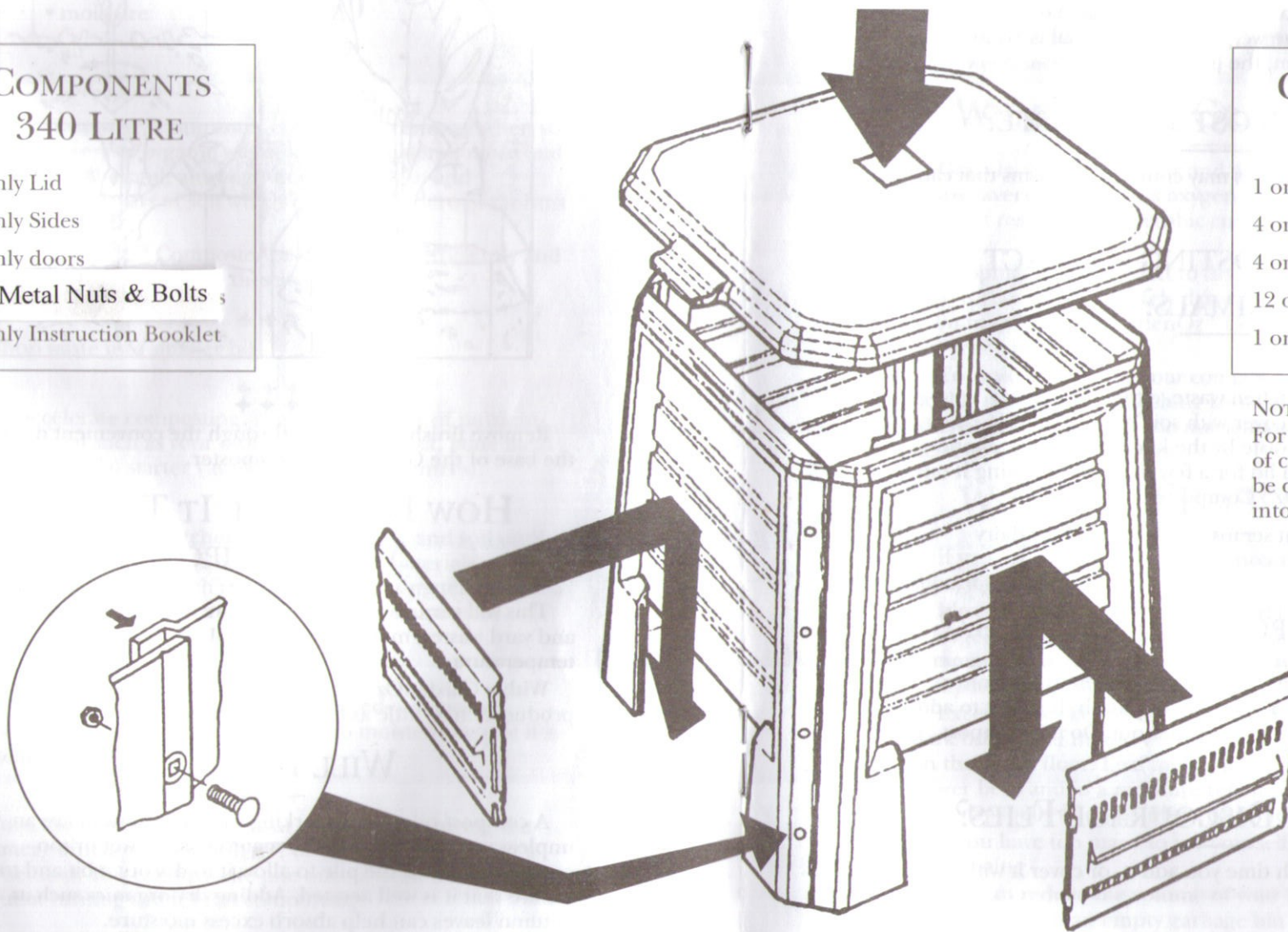
COMPONENTS 340 LITRE

- 1 only Lid
- 4 only Sides
- 4 only doors
- 16 Metal Nuts & Bolts
- 1 only Instruction Booklet

COMPONENTS 210 LITRE

- 1 only Lid
- 4 only Sides
- 4 only doors
- 12 only nylon Nuts & Bolts
- 1 only Instruction Booklet

NOTE:
For more efficient removal
of compost, base of bin can
be dug approximately 25mm
into ground.



WHAT IS THE BEST LOCATION FOR COMPOSTING?

Place the GardenOz™ Composter on a level patch of earth in the sun, convenient to the house. It is important that the ground is level so that the weight of the material is evenly distributed. If it is uneven, the lid won't fit.

CAN I COMPOST PET WASTE?

No. Both dog and cat feces may contain organisms that can cause disease in humans.

WILL COMPOSTING ATTRACT ANIMALS?

To lessen this risk:

- When adding kitchen waste, either dig it in immediately or cover with soil. You may find it easier to collect food waste by the kitchen sink in a plastic container with a lid for a few days before taking it out to the GardenOz™ Composter.
- Do not add meat scraps, fat, bones, fish or dairy products to your compost pile.

CAN I COMPOST WOOD ASHES?

Yes, wood ashes that are cold and soaked in water from a fireplace or stove are a good source of potash. It is best to add many thin layers as the potash leaches out. Do not compost charcoal or coal ashes.

HOW CAN I DISCOURAGE FLIES?

Dig in food waste each time you add it, or cover it with a little soil.

CAN I COMPOST WEEDS?

To prevent contaminating the soil with weed seeds, do not put ripened weeds in the compost heap. If the weeds are green and the seeds have not matured, they may be safely added to the GardenOz™ Composter. Place weeds near the centre of the bin where the heat is more intense. This will kill most weed seeds.

WHAT ABOUT GRASS CLIPPINGS?

Grass is about 60% water and 40% cellulose and packs into dense layers, which limits oxygen penetration. The net result is an anaerobic condition, producing terrible odours.

Clippings should be left to dry for a day, or until they turn brown (but not completely dried out). Add them in layers of 150mm (6") to the GardenOz™ Composter, or mix 50-50 with last year's leaves.

To avoid overloading your composter with grass clippings, double mow or use a mulching lawn mower leaving the clippings where they fall. This will add nutrients to your lawn, lowering the need for chemical fertilisers.

WHAT CAN I DO WITH LEAVES?

If you are lucky enough to have lots of leaves you can make superior compost and leaf mould.

Ideally, the leaves should be saved to be mixed in with nitrogen-rich grass clippings and weeds in the spring and summer. Leaves form the correct balance for superior compost, being high in carbon.

Excess leaves kept from the Autumn decompose into fluffy, dark brown leaf mould with that lovely earthy aroma you find on the forest floor. Leaf mould is ideal for weed control on flower beds and as a moisture-retaining mulch, especially for long dry spells when plants need it most.

If you have too many to use yourself, store for next season's composting.

You can reduce the volume of your leaves 15 to 20 times by placing them in an empty garbage bin and using an electric string trimmer to chop them up.

An equally successful volume reduction method is to run your rotary lawn mower back and forth over the pile of leaves.

IMPORTANT: *This is particularly necessary with gum leaves as these leaves do not break down readily in the compost heap.*

PRINCIPLES OF COMPOSTING

This section is for those who would like a more thorough understanding of how composting works.

The compost pile is a teeming microbial farm. Bacteria start the process of decaying organic matter by breaking down plant tissue. Fungi and actinomycetes soon join the bacteria. Later in the cycle, centipedes, millipedes, beetles and earthworms do their part.

Anything growing in your yard is potential food for these tiny decomposers. Carbon and nitrogen, from cells of dead plants and dead microbes, fuel their activity. The micro-organisms use the carbon in leaves or woodier wastes as an energy source. Nitrogen provides the microbes with the raw element of protein to build their bodies.

Everything organic has a ratio of carbon to nitrogen (C:N) in its tissues; grass clippings, for example, have a C:N of 25, meaning there are 25 parts of carbon to one part nitrogen.

Average C:N for commonly composted materials are:

oak leaves	50
ash leaves	25
sawdust	150-500
vegetable trimmings	15-25
pine needles	60-110

The ideal C:N is around 30. The C:N need not be exact, and you are unlikely to have a precise way to measure it anyway. If you are having problems with your compost pile, however, it may be because you have too little of one type of material. If, for example, you have mostly materials which are high in carbon, such as sawdust or dry leaves, composting may be very slow.

You can speed things up by mixing in materials high in nitrogen such as grass clippings or kitchen scraps.

If your pile is giving off an odour of ammonia, the problem may be an excess of materials high in nitrogen. Simply add some high carbon materials.

Layering can be useful in arriving at the correct proportions, but a complete mixing of ingredients is preferable for the composting process.

SURFACE AREA

The more surface area micro-organisms have to work on, the faster the materials are decomposed. It's like a block of ice in the sun - slow to melt when it's large, but melts very fast when broken into smaller pieces.

Chopping your garden wastes with our compost turner or a shovel or running them through a shredding machine or lawn mower will speed their composting.

VOLUME

A large compost pile will insulate itself and hold the heat of microbial activity. Its centre will be warmer than its edges. Smaller piles will have trouble holding heat. Larger piles won't allow enough air to reach the microbes at the centre.

MOISTURE AND AERATION

All life on earth needs a certain amount of water and air to sustain itself - even the microbes in the compost pile. They function best when the compost materials are about as moist as a wrung-out sponge, and are provided with many air passages. Extremes of sun or rain can adversely affect this moisture balance.

TIME AND TEMPERATURE

The faster the composting, the hotter the pile. If you use materials with a proper C:N ratio, provide a large amount of surface area and a big enough volume, and see that moisture and aeration are adequate, you will have a hot, fast compost (hot enough to burn your hand!).

KEEP YOUR COMPOSTER COMPOSTING

OPTIMAL CONDITIONS

Composting requires about two cubic feet of equal portions of grass, leaves, plant and vegetable trimmings, all chopped up, moistened and thoroughly mixed to cause pile to heat. Outside temperature must be at least 10°C. Usually takes 3-4 days to heat up to maximum temperature.

MINIMAL CONDITIONS

When conditions are improper, the temperature won't rise and composting is inhibited. It's easy to get your composter working at its maximum.

Compost Condition	Moist (no smell)	Dry (no smell)	Wet (smells)	Soggy (smells)
Problem	not enough nitrogen material	in direct sun and no new materials added	too much fresh fruit skins, rinds, bruised fruit or vegetables	rain or excessive watering
Solution	add nitrogen materials like grass cuttings, manure or an organic activator	add enough water to dampen only and add nitrogen material if necessary	add shovelful of dry soil, shredded leaves	turn pile to aerate and add shredded leaves

You can add small quantities if you can't generate two cubic feet of materials at one time; it just takes a little longer to break down into compost.