

## Sandra Larkin

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**From:** Jean Curlee <jfcurlee@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 26, 2021 9:45 AM  
**To:** Sandra Larkin; Meta Plotnik; Mary Albrecht; Ellen Kutner; Kay Saderholm; Pamela Lovinger; Deborah Glynn; Pat Smith; Alan Berkowitz; Dan Degan; Marsmuse74@gmail.com  
**Cc:** Jean Curlee  
**Subject:** Composting at Summer Camp

On July 22, 2021, I presented A Composting activity with ten third and fourth graders at Pleasant Valley Camp Sunny Days.

The first thing I did was put two large tin dishes in the middle of the table, one with Compost and one with dirt and asked them to feel the texture. There was a huge difference, and they were amazed. The dirt was hard, had big lumps, stuck to your fingers and was *yucky*. The compost was soft, crumbly and didn't stick to your hands. Next we talked about **COMPOST CRITTERS** that helped the dirt become compost. I showed a picture of the critters, many kids were excited to tell me they had seen them or had held them in their hands. They loved talking about them.

The next step was having each child make their own compost layers in a small jar. I passed bins with the following ingredients around the table. and the kids filled their jar with them.

Layer 1 - Base - Twigs & sticks broken into small pieces

Layer 2 - BROWN - Shredded newspaper & brown paper bags

Layer 3 - GREEN - Dried grass clippings mixed with dried crushed leaves

Layer 4 - BROWN - DIRT

Layer 5 - WORMS - They each picked one with their fingers and wanted to name it. They loved the wiggly worms.

Layer 6 - GREEN - Kitchen Scraps (cut into small pieces for use in small jar)

Layer 7 - BROWN - Dirt

Layer 8 - GREEN - Grass clippings and a small drop/spritz of water.

A piece of netting was put on top of the jar, held in place with a rubber band. They were each given a lid to put on for taking the jar home, but were told to take the lid off at home, place the jar in a cool place, not in the sun, and observe. I also gave out a Best Ever Compost sheet, from

the Cornell Cooperative Extension, and on the back were the Compost Layers (brown,green) and a list of types of Green and Brown items and what NOT to compost.

They each got a label to write their name on and put on their jar so they could take it home. The counselors also participated in the activity.

The Climate Smart Task Force plans to repeat this at the 200th Anniversary of Pleasant Valley in September.

Jean Curlee

Pleasant Valley Climate Smart Task Force

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## Sandra Larkin

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**From:** meta plotnik <metaplotnik@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 25, 2021 6:21 PM  
**To:** Jean Curlee; Debby Glynn; Pamela Lovinger; Sandra Larkin; Kay Saderholm; Patricia Smith; Alan Berkowitz; Ellen Kutner; Mary Albrecht; Dan Degan; Michelle Bear; Meta Plotnik  
**Subject:** Sunny Days, July 22, 2021 From Meta Plotnik, CS,CAC

### Ending Single-Use Plastic

I met with 9 10-11 year old girls and several CIT's and their counselor around a picnic table for about 40 minutes

I mentioned that composting (Jean's group) was a way to take vegetable and yard waste out of the garbage stream and make new dirt. We would talk about eliminating plastic items only used once.

> I spread out my Earth Day map of the world that I constructed to illustrate the threats to the oceans, sea creatures and beaches. Some knew about sea turtles caught in nets and a straw stuck in a nose. Others knew about plastic breaking down and consumed by fish and other animals. A dead whale was discovered with 115 plastic cups, 4 plastic bottles, 25 plastic bags and other pieces of plastic in its stomach. The great plastic garbage patches were not so familiar. When single use items are tossed on the street or out the car window, they often are washed into rivers and into the ocean with harmful consequences.

> I had a box of single-use plastic items, and they guessed the items: bottle, cup, straw, utensils, plastic top to paper coffee cup, snack wrapper, plastic bag which is first banned item in New York State's initiative. The campers are all required to bring reusable water bottles. A bill in US Congress wants to raise the deposit on bottles so more are recycled. Some states already offer 10 cents. I mentioned the female Scouts who collect bottles at our transfer station every second Saturday. They are saving money for trips. The girls didn't recognize cigarette filters that are made of plastic and are everywhere. Just as well at their age.

> Reusing plastic containers. Reduce and think of clever uses. I brought a plastic quart container that actually instructed us to remove the label and reuse. We passed it around so every girl pulled off a piece. I asked who wanted it and many raised their hands so we did the number thing.

> What makes reducing plastic so hard? habit, throw away society, takes a family, a community, a country

Good start we hope.

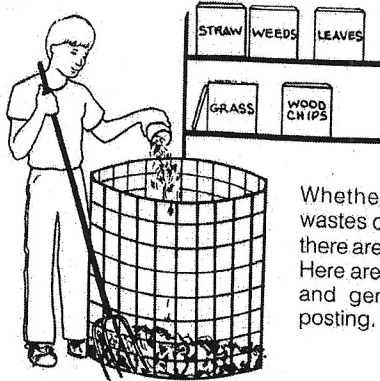




# Best Ever Compost

## Just Follow the Recipe!

Composting is like baking a cake. Simply add the ingredients, stir, "bake," and out comes—compost!



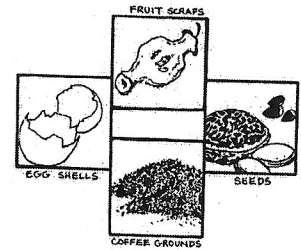
Whether you compost kitchen wastes or yard and garden wastes, there are a few basic steps to follow. Here are the necessary ingredients and general directions for composting.

## Ingredients

### Kitchen Compost

Add a mixture of some or all of the following ingredients:

- vegetable peels and seeds
- fruit peels and seeds
- coffee grounds
- egg shells
- nut shells
- any other vegetable or fruit scraps

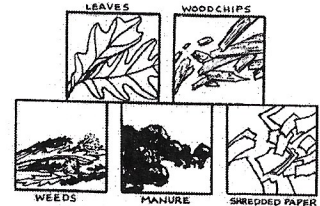


**(Do not add meat scraps, bones, dairy products, oils, or fat. They may attract pesty animals.)**

### Yard or Garden Compost

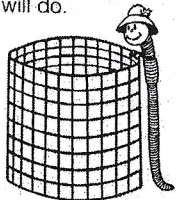
Add a mixture of some or all of the following ingredients:

- hay or straw
- grass clippings
- leaves
- ashes
- sawdust
- wood chips
- weeds and other garden waste
- manure
- shredded paper

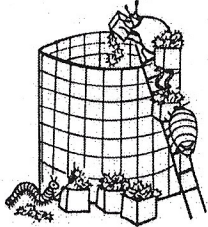


## Directions

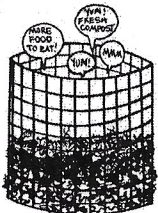
1. Choose a "pot" for baking your compost. Any type of composting bin will do.



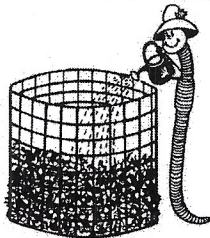
2. Place kitchen or yard wastes into the composting bin. Chop or shred the organic materials if you want them to compost quickly.



3. Spread soil or "already done" compost over the compost pile. This layer contains the microorganisms and soil animals that do the work of making the compost. It also helps keep the surface from drying out.



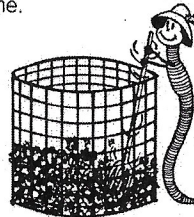
4. Adjust the moisture in your compost pile. Add dry straw or sawdust to soggy materials, or add water to a pile that is too dry. The materials should be damp to the touch, but not so wet that drops come out when you squeeze.



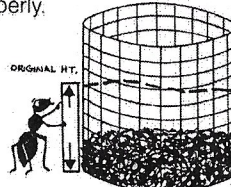
5. Allow the pile to "bake." It should heat up quickly and reach the desired temperature (90° to 140°F, or 32° to 60°C) in four to five days.



6. Stir your compost as it bakes if you want to speed up the baking time.



7. The pile will settle down from its original height. This is a good sign that the compost is baking properly.



8. If you mix or turn your compost pile every week, it should be "done," or ready to use, in one to two months. If you don't turn it, the compost should be ready in about six to twelve months.

9. Your "best ever compost" should look like dark crumbly soil with small pieces of organic material. It should have a sweet, earthy smell.



10. Feed compost to hungry plants by mixing it with the soil.



Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Helping You Put Knowledge to Work



# COMPOST LAYERS

**BROWN**

**GREEN**

**BROWN**

**GREEN**

**BROWN**

**BASE**

## Types of Green

Kitchen scraps  
Vegetable & fruit peels  
coffee grounds & tea bags  
fresh grass clippings  
lettuce  
egg shells  
any vegetable & fruit  
scraps

## Types of Brown

Fallen dead leaves  
shredded paper  
Hay, straw  
Shredded newspaper  
dead leaves  
Sticks & small twigs  
Dried grass clippings

## DO NOT COMPOST

**MEAT, BONES, FATTY  
FOODS, CHEESE,  
SALAD DRESSING**

# COMPOST CRITTERS WORKSHEET

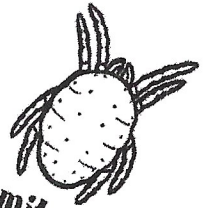
Circle Me If You Can Find Me



collenbola



springtail



mite



sow bug



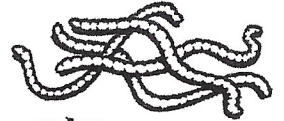
slug



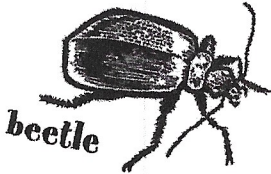
worm cocoon



fruit fly



white worms



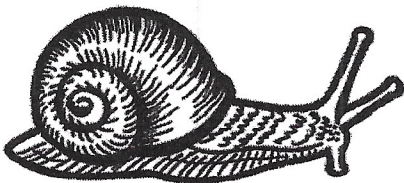
beetle



redworm



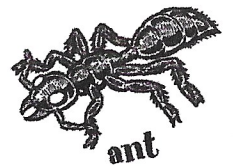
spider



snail



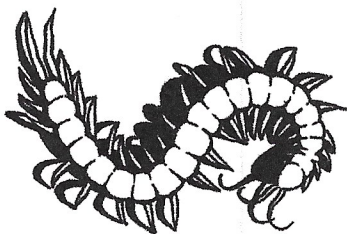
mold



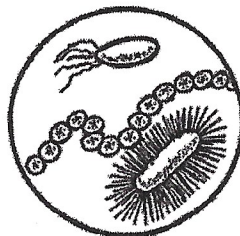
ant



millipede



centipede



bacteria



pill bug

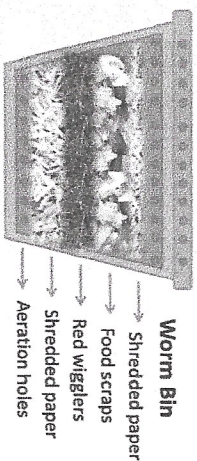
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## VERMICOMPOSTING -

### Composting with Worms

- \* Produces a high quality soil amendment
- \* Requires little space, labor & maintenance
- \* Reproduces new worms for continuous composting



#### The Basics:

- Keep worms dark & between 40—80 degrees
- Ensure shredded paper stays moist
- Feed about once a week or less - banana peels, melon rinds, coffee grounds, vegetable peels (no meats or dairy)
- Harvest worm castings and related compost when dark & crumbly

#### Using Your Vermicompost:

- Lawns - 20 lbs. per 1000 square feet
- Gardens - a handful in each hole
- Potted Plants - 20% or less of potting mixture

## RESOURCES

- Composting at Home: the Green and Brown Alternative - <http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/compostingathome.pdf>
- Composting: Wastes to Resources - <http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/compostingwastesresources.pdf>
- Vermicomposting: A Living Soil Amendment - <http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/vermicompost.htm>

*Cornell Cooperative Extension in Dutchess County offers equal program and employment opportunities.*

## TROUBLE SHOOTING

### ⇒ Damp &/or warm only in middle

- *Pile could be too small or weather cold*
- \* Pile should be at least 3 cubic feet

### ⇒ Nothing is happening

- *Not enough nitrogen, oxygen &/or water*
- \* Add greens, aerate &/or add water
- *Cold weather*
- \* Wait until Spring
- *Compost is finished*
- \* You're done!

### ⇒ Matted leaves/grass clippings are not breaking down

- *Poor aeration or lack of moisture*
- \* Break up &/or shred the layers and turn the pile

### ⇒ Smells like rotten eggs

- *Not enough oxygen*
- \* aerate the pile
- *Pile is too wet &/or compacted*
- \* Add dry materials

### ⇒ Smells like ammonia

- *Not enough brown/carbon*
- \* Add brown/carbon materials

### ⇒ Attracts rodents or other animals

- *Inappropriate materials*
- \* Bury kitchen scraps near the center
- *Kitchen scraps too close to surface*
- \* Switch to a rodent-proof closed bin

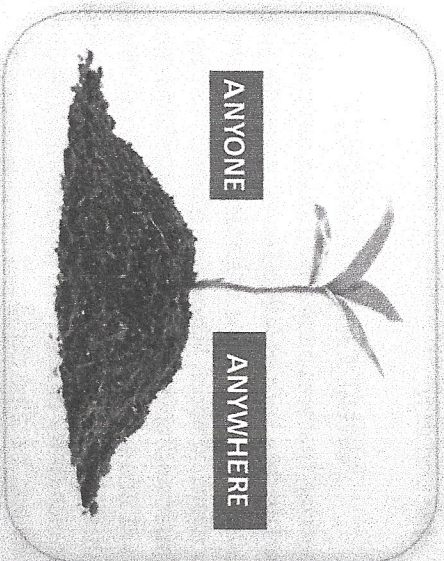
### ⇒ Attracts insects

- *Normal composting*
- \* Not a problem

### ⇒ Attracts lots of fire ants

- *Pile too dry &/or not hot enough*
- \* Ensure right material mix & moisture

**ORGANIC RECYCLING  
STARTS WITH HOME  
COMPOSTING**



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
Dutchess County



Cornell Waste Management Institute

[www.ccedutchess.org](http://www.ccedutchess.org)



## WHAT IS COMPOST?

Compost is a dark, crumbly and earthy smelling form of decomposing organic matter.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Organics such as food scraps, food preparation residuals, food soiled paper products, leaves, grass clippings, brush and tree trimmings comprise over 60% of our waste stream and are completely recyclable. That's where composting comes in.
- Composting helps create a healthier, more sustainable environment.
- Anyone, anywhere can home compost. It's fun and easy!

## WHAT CAN I COMPOST?

Anything that was once alive can be composted. Yard wastes, such as fallen leaves, grass clippings, weeds and the remains of garden plants, make excellent compost. Woody yard wastes can be clipped and sawed down to a size useful for the wood stove or fireplace or they can be run through a shredder for mulching and path making. Used as a mulch or for paths, they will eventually decompose and become compost.

Care must be taken when composting kitchen scraps. Meats, bones, and fatty foods (such as cheese, salad dressing and leftover cooking oil) should be put in the garbage since they can attract nuisance animals.

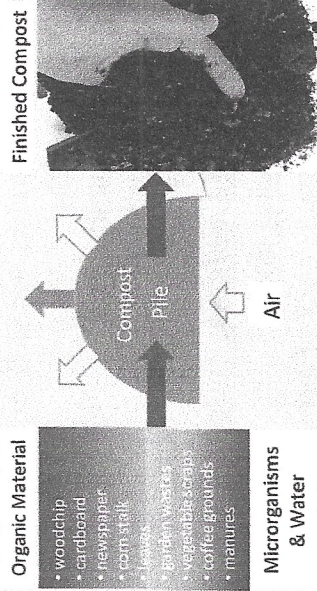
## HOW CAN I USE COMPOST?

Compost can be used to enrich a flower and vegetable garden, to improve the soil around trees and shrubs, as a soil amendment for houseplants and planter boxes and, when screened, as part of a seed-starting mix or lawn top-dressing.

## COMPOSTING BASIC

### 4 Simple ingredients..... Food, Water, Air, Shelter

To compost effectively, you need the right proportions of materials, space, air and water.



The best way to describe the organic materials is by color: **Browns** are high in carbon; **Greens** are high in nitrogen. **Greens** provide the nitrogen source, are colorful and wet. They provide nutrients and moisture for the compost workforce. **Browns** provide the carbon source, energy and are also used for absorbing excess moisture and giving structural strength to your pile. They help keep the pile porous, facilitate air-flow and prevent compaction.

To achieve the perfect carbon to nitrogen ration (30:1) mix: 1 part **Green** to 2-3 parts **Brown**.

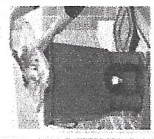
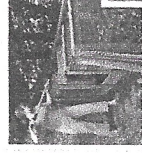
Making a compost pile is like making lasagna, Start with a layer of coarse 'browns' in contact with the soil. Make a well or depression in this layer and put the 'greens' into the well. Keep the food scraps away from the outside edges of the pile. Cover your 'greens' with a generous layer of 'browns' so that no food is showing. Keep adding layers of greens and browns until the mass reaches a height of 3' - 4'.

## MICRO & MACRO ORGANISMS DO ALL THE WORK

## CONTAINERS

### Types of Containers:

- On the Ground - these units sit directly on the ground so that worms and other decomposers can come up from the soil to assist in the composting process. They can be bought or simply made from wood and wire, a can with the bottom cut out or even a trench in the ground.
- Above the Ground - these consist of rotating drum units, counter top models, barrel, or any other design that does not come in direct contact with the ground.



## SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER

- What type of organic material do you want to compost?
- How much organic material do you have to compost?
- Do you have enough carbon and a place to store it?
- Where are you going to put the bin?
- What is the compost bin made of and how will it look in its space?
- How fast can organic materials be turned into compost?

*Funding for compost information is provided by  
Dutchess County.*