

COMPOSTING

Purpose: emphasize the simplicity of composting

Questions:

***what is composting?**

Since time before time dead plant and animal matter have been combining with air and water to become rich soil. This rich soil in turn supports more plant life and by extension more animal life... We humans become involved when we design a space, monitor the conditions, and harvest rich humus at the end of the process. We can use this humus in our garden and in our house plants.

***why compost at home?**

Most of us value rich soil, healthy plants, and hard earned money. The waste we send to the landfill is like a bleeding vein. Every time we send organic matter to the landfill we miss the opportunity to close the system and restore circulation. This one way traffic of nutrients costs money.

Up to 60% of landfill is organic matter capable of turning into soil: grass clippings, yard waste, kitchen waste. In the landfill these materials do not decompose. Surrounded by inert materials they are preserved intact in isolated pockets taking up valuable space and tying up resources.

***what goes in your bin? and what doesn't?**

Organic matter will decompose; cement, glass, plastic, metal will not.

Plant matter will render a sweet smelling compost whereas animal flesh will rot with a familiarly unpleasant odor, therefore keep meat and cheese out of the bin. Similarly the droppings of vegetable eating animals are valuable for your compost mix whereas the feces of meat eaters like your dog or cat should be kept out.

Seeds are quite durable and should be kept out of the mix or they will sprout without your consent where you least expect them.

***describe the kitchen to bin experience?**

I keep an open beautiful ceramic bowl on a matching plate by the sink. Vegetable ends, fruit peels, coffee grinds, and any tea bags fill up the 4 cup container and at least once a day I take a short walk to the garden compost bin.

***how do you proportion materials in a compost bin?**

Mix more browns than greens in a proportion of about 2:1. This takes care of moisture and allows for air to circulate in between.

***what can go wrong?**

Large twigs and matted clumps of weeds will fill up your bin too quickly - they are best allowed to decompose in some corner of your yard in an open pile.

A bin filled with only kitchen waste, which is very wet and nitrogen rich, will turn into a smelly slime. It will eventually decompose but very very slowly tying up your bin for a very long time.

A bin filled with brown leaves, which are nitrogen poor and carbon rich, will eventually decompose but can remain a dry fluffy pile of leaves for a long time also tying up your bin with little appreciable activity.

Minor imbalances inside the bin can greet you with fruit flies or a disagreeable smell when you open the lid to add materials. A simple step and you will correct the situation almost immediately: add some brown leaves and stir in air.

***what is the down side of composting?**

Even though you will put out significantly less garbage at the curb, your trash collector will charge you the same!

***what are the benefits of composting?**

After we eat and have taken nutrients for ourselves, we return leftover nutrients from vegetables and fruits, cooked grains and legumes to the soil.

When the growing season slows down and like mana from heaven the leaves fall to the ground we can regard them as source of new life come spring.

Cut grass blades are allowed to decompose right where they fall, keeping them from traveling long gas miles.

Such a simple mindful act shows the next generation how we care for our world.