

Kennebunk Compost Workgroup Information Sheet

(Written with the help of Kennebunk High School Alternative Education Program and
Adapted from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Guidelines for Composting)

The value of composting: Composting turns food and garden waste into rich soil, eliminating these weighty materials from our expensive, town waste stream. Composting also sequesters carbon and methane into the soil, preventing it from entering the atmosphere.

How to Create a Simple Compost System

1. Choose a level, well-drained site to place your compost bin. Add five inches of leaves or dried grass clippings to the bottom to give the pile a good start, and, if possible, add a few shovels of soil now and again to activate the bin.
2. Layer materials high in nitrogen (food waste, fresh grass clippings, and possibly livestock manure) and those high in carbon (such as dried leaves and dried garden waste).
3. Move materials from the center to the outside and vice versa. Turning over every other week will speed up composting, but even if you never turn and simply layer, you will eventually end up with good soil. Water periodically if necessary. The pile should be moist but not saturated.
4. Finished compost will smell sweet and be cool and crumbly. The final product looks and feels like fertile soil, providing vital nutrients to help plants grow and look better.

Things You Can Compost	Things You Shouldn't Compost
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• food waste• leaves• grass clippings and garden waste• coffee grounds/ tea bags• livestock manure• sawdust• shredded paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• diseased plants• meat scraps• dog or cat manure• wood ash

If you want more detailed information about the two composting options (hot/fast composting or cold composting) refer to the USDA website's Composting Resources.

Common Challenges and Solutions

- If you notice that nothing is happening, you may need to add more nitrogen (see options above), water, or air (by continuing to turn the pile).
- If things are too hot, you probably have too much nitrogen. Add some more carbon materials (see options above) to reduce the heating.
- To eliminate both insects and bad smells, bury food waste in the pile.



Caring for your compost bin

If and when you decide to open your compost bin, please keep in mind that the fasteners are not reusable. You will need to find your own ties or fasteners to put your bin back together!

Harvesting Your Soil

When you are ready to harvest your soil, remove the fasteners and unwind the lobster trap wire. Reconstruct the bin as near as possible and, again, line the bottom with leaves or dried grass clippings. Transfer the top part of the partially composted material from the old bin onto the lining of the reconstructed bin. What is left in the pile from the old bin is ready for your garden, flower beds, and/or your lawn.