

## **Make your own compost!**

You can make some in a small bucket for your houseplants, or in a big bin outside for your vegetables and flowers, or even to amend a bare spot in your lawn.

All compost requires four ingredients:

1. **Browns** – dry leaves, used paper products such as napkins, food boxes, news paper. Your compost will break down even faster if these products can be shredded, but you don't have to.
2. **Greens** – grass clippings, vegetable waste, fruit scraps, tea bags (take out the staples), coffee grounds, crushed egg shells (rinse the insides first).
3. **Water** – rain, from a hose or rain barrel, or you can add water leftover from cooking pasta or vegetables after it's cooled.
4. **Air** – if using a bucket a few holes will do, if using a Rubbermaid tub, poke a few holes in the top. If outside, leaving the top open to the sun, and a wire fence is good.

**Do not** compost meat or fish scraps, dairy products, oils and grease, meat or fish bones, pet wastes, or diseased plant material.

## **Mixing**

If you can, start with a balance of three parts brown materials to one part green.

Too much of any one kind of material can slow down the process.

Adding a bit of soil, sod, compost starter, or organic nitrogen fertilizer will help speed the process too.

## **Turn and Mix**

Mixing the contents of your pile, no matter how small, will help the pile break down faster.

Turn your compost whenever you add new materials. This helps distribute oxygen and moisture to keep decomposition going. (If a small bin you can use a trowel, if outside, a shovel or potato fork).

Ideally you should mix your compost once a week, but if you aren't in a hurry, once a month is fine.

## **Water**

A compost pile needs moisture to keep the composting process active. Don't let the compost completely dry out, but don't let it get too wet—it will become soggy and smelly. If you notice a stench, add more browns and turn.

## **Using Compost**

Compost will be ready when it looks and smells like very dark, crumbly soil. By following the compost guidelines, your compost should be ready in as little as three months or up to a year. You can use your compost as-is, removing larger items (avocado pits, corn cobs) and adding it to your soil or lawn, or anywhere that could benefit from good, nourishing soil.

*Compiled by Michelle Voelker for All Church VBS, Parable of the Sower, 2021*

