

Project Specifications

The compost demonstration site, located on the east side of the OSU Extension Building in Hood River, was developed in 2004. The goal is to demonstrate the various types of composting equipment and techniques to recycle yard, garden and kitchen waste. There are examples of different types of compost bins, as well as vermiculture (worm composting), cover crops, sod composting and lasagna (sheet) composting.

The first composting workshop was held at the site in September 2004; the site continues to be used for workshops and classes. Contact OSU Extension for a schedule.



Acknowledgements

The compost demonstration site was built by OSU Extension Master Gardeners and made possible by a grant from the Hood River Garbage Service, a Waste Connections Company.

Additional donations for this project came from Columbia Tree Service, Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital, Hood River County, Rosauers Supermarket and the National Gardening Association.

The storage shed adjacent to the compost demonstration site was also built by Master Gardeners. It was made possible by donations from Tum-a-Lum Lumber Company, Kreig Millwork, the Columbia Gorge Master Gardener Association, the Oregon Master Gardener Association, Hood River County and Hood River Garbage Service, a Waste Connections Company.

The Learning Garden is being developed and maintained by the Oregon State University Extension Service Master Gardener™ Program—Central Gorge Chapter. The garden features several demonstration areas that are used to teach gardening techniques to members of the public.

Many local businesses and individuals have contributed to the success of this project, providing cash, materials and in-kind services.

If you or your business would like to partner with CGMGA with maintenance of the Learning Garden, please contact Project Leaders Mary Parrott at 541 352-7418 or Nancy Slagle at 541 352-4156 or email to njslagle@gmail.com.

Take a self guided tour of the Learning Garden at the OSU Extension Office at 2990 Experiment Station Dr. in Hood River. The garden is open during daylight hours.



Oregon State University Extension Service
Master Gardener™ Program

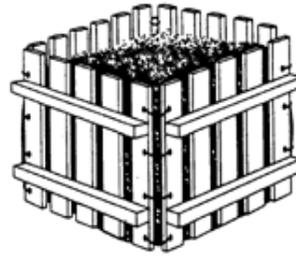
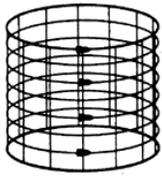
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Compost



Compost Demonstration Site

Feeding soil. Starving landfills.



How do I compost?

Compost HAPPENS no matter what you do; plant material decomposes naturally. However, if you want compost sooner rather than later, follow five simple rules:

1. Uniform particle size: Chop all of your yard debris down to 1 inch pieces or smaller. Use clippers, chipper/shredder or mower.
2. Mix: Combine equal volumes of browns (dried leaves, twigs, etc.) and greens (fresh grass, weeds, etc.). Put coarsest materials on bottom to improve aeration and drainage, then add 2-3 inch layers of alternating green and brown organic matter.
3. Pile size: Build the compost pile at least 1 cubic yard (3'x3'x3') so it builds up internal heat to 130° or higher.
4. Moisture: Sprinkle water on the pile so it feels damp like a wrung-out sponge. Repeat as needed while the compost "cooks".
5. Aeration: Turn/stir your pile once a week for 1-3 months, depending on degree of internal heat.

Compost will "finish" sooner if the compost pile is covered and hot. A soil temperature probe can be used to check internal heat level; when the level drops to below 130°, it is time to turn the pile. The pile needs to maintain 130° for 6 hours a day over three days to kill weed seeds and pathogens in the pile.

When the compost pile has turned dark and crumbly with a nice earthy smell, it is done. The pile should be about 1/2 of its original size.

What Not to Compost...

- Meats, fats, dairy products
- Human or pet waste
- Processed food from the kitchen
- Diseased plants
- Invasive weeds, weeds with seed heads
- Lime and wood ashes

What is compost?

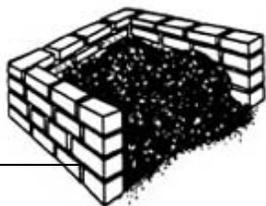
Compost is a dark, crumbly mixture of decomposed organic matter such as grass clippings, leaves, twigs and branches. It is low in soluble nutrients but rich in biological diversity.

Why compost?

Compost is a beneficial soil additive that improves the physical structure (tilth) of the soil and provides a complex blend of micronutrients that plants need for optimal growth.

A 2 inch layer of compost applied yearly creates a mulch to control weeds and conserve water. It also increases the water-holding capacity of soil. Compost decreases the need for chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides.

By shredding and composting your yard and fruit/vegetable kitchen waste, you'll reduce the amount of waste you send to the landfill and lessen your need to purchase and apply packaged soil additives.



Additional Information

Improving Garden Soils with Organic Matter - OSU publication EC 1561
Cover Crops for Home Gardeners—OSU publication FS 304
Gardening with Compost, Mulches and Row Crops—OSU publication EC 1247
Teaming with Microbes—A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web by Jeff Lowenfels & Wayne Lewis
Worms Eat My Garbage by Mary Appelhof
Lasagne Gardening by Patricia Lanza
Soil Biology Primer by Elaine Ingham (available as free pdf download from http://soils.usda.gov/sqi/concepts/soil_biology/biology.html)

Websites

<http://howtocompost.org/>
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/>

Resources

OSU Extension Office, OSU Master Gardener™ Program—Central Gorge Chapter: 541-386-3343

Hood River Soil & Water Conservation District: 541-386-4588