



# BACKYARD COMPOSTING!

Presented by:

Matt Tracy – Red Planet Vegetables

Kate Sayles – Northern RI Conservation District

# WHY COMPOST?

- Recycle Waste
  - Food waste makes up 20-30% of what the average American throws away...
    - that's a lot of food in the landfill
  - The landfill eats too much of your valuable kitchen scraps- let's put it on a diet!
- Compost will Enrich Your Soil
  - Retain soil moisture
  - Contains beneficial microorganisms
  - Adds nutrients – alternative to chemical fertilizers
- Reduce your Carbon Footprint!
  - Composting reduces methane in landfills
  - Reduced emissions from travel to the landfill by keeping it in your yard
- Using compost suppresses disease and pests



# HOW DOES IT WORK?

Carbon! Nitrogen! Oxygen! Hydrogen!

Composting uses the essential building blocks of life to create a medium for microorganisms to turn your *waste to wonder!*

Compost needs **Brown** materials for energy and **Green** materials for protein production

**Brown** adds Carbon

**Green** adds Nitrogen

Proper composting requires the perfect recipe:

**the Brown to Green ratio**

3 parts Brown

1 part Green

*Helpful Hints:*

Too much Brown slows compost Down

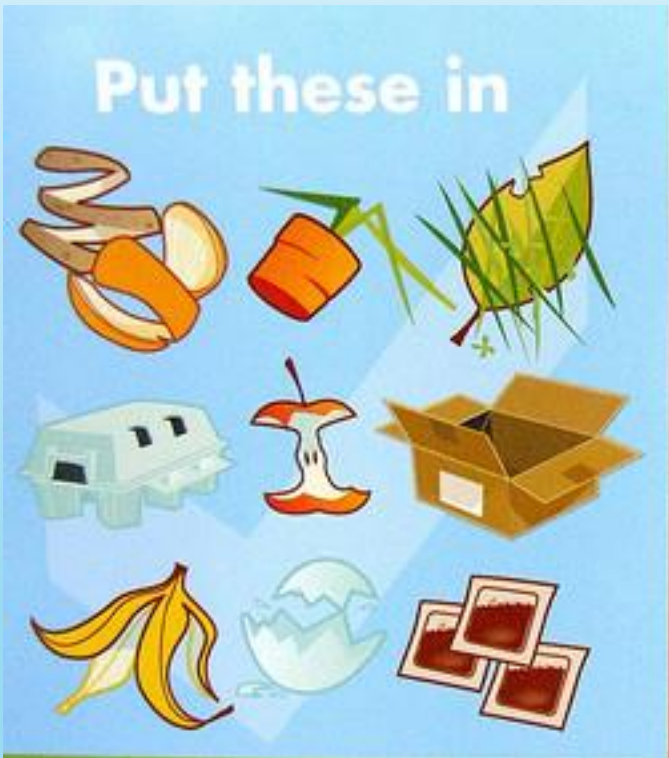
Too much Green makes your compost smell like a Latrine



# WHAT TO COMPOST

## BROWN VS. GREEN

What's the difference between **Brown** and **Green** materials?



### **Brown Materials:**

- Leaves
- Bark
- Straw
- Corn husks
- Straw
- Paper bags
- Moss
- Peat
- Saw Dust

### **Green Materials:**

- Fruit scraps
- Vegetable scraps
- Coffee grinds
- Non-diseased dead plants
- Grass clippings
- Manures

*Easy Rule of Thumb:* For the most part, brown is generally stuff you find outside, green is stuff you generate inside

# WHAT NOT TO COMPOST:

Meat

Fish

Bones

Weeds

Diseased plants

Grass clippings with chemicals

Grease

Peanut butter

Cat litter

Black walnut leaves, twigs or nuts

Commercial Charcoal

Pet poop – dogs & cats

Cheese

Dairy products

Oil



# HOW DOES IT WORK?

(CONTINUED)

The microorganisms that turn your trash into treasure need some help from their friends

## Air and Water

Once you have a good 3:1 Brown to Green ratio, your pile will need:

**Air** to keep the pile aerated and smell-free

**Water** (Hydrogen + Oxygen) to keep your pile moist

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*Helpful Hints:*

Your compost pile should be as moist as a damp, rung-out sponge



# LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

You will want to find a spot for your compost pile that is:

Close enough to your house

Will you use it if it's too far away?

Shady

You want to keep that pile moist, and direct sunlight will dry it out!

On dry ground

Will enrich the soil if you are using an open system



# WHAT TO COMPOST IN?

When it comes to composting vessels, there are many options.

Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation has a great deal on Compost Bins (the one we're using)! Like them on Facebook, and print a coupon for \$15 off!

Would you like to construct your own? Please see our resource handout with links to instructions for making a bin out of:

- Pallets
- Chicken wire and Stakes
- Trash Can
- Cinder Blocks

You can keep your bin open or closed- depends on your preferences and where you live.





# HOW TO COMPOST!



Now that you know what to compost, where you want to compost and the importance of the 3:1 Brown to Green recipe, you're ready!

Add your brown compost first, and layer in your green materials

Every time you add green materials from your kitchen, mix them into the brown materials  
Add more brown if you need to

Your pile will begin to reduce in the first week- those are some hungry microorganisms!

Your compost needs air to really get going, and to keep your pile smell-free  
use a pitchfork or shovel to mix your compost up 1-3 x a week

# HOW TO COMPOST!

(CONTINUED)

Check the moisture:

if its too dry, add a little water and mix it up  
too wet? Add more dry brown material to the top

Check the temperature:

to really get cranking, you ideally want your pile to be between 130-150 degrees

Fully turn your compost between 5-7 months and let it do it's thing!

Start a new pile at around 7 months



# HARVESTING YOUR COMPOST

You successfully made compost! What do you do now??

Use it, of course!



## **Sift it!**

You can use a screen to sift out the finished compost – see the resource sheet on how to make your own at home!

## **Apply it!**

Use your compost as potting mix, mulch, or in your garden!

The finished product should have a neutral pH and should be chock-full of nutrients!

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

How long does it take to have a finished product?

Why is my pile steaming?

Why is my pile soggy?

Won't I attract animals?

Others?

