

Composting Basics

COMPOST:

GREENS (Nitrogen)

Grass clippings
Coffee grounds and filters
Tea Bags (if they are biodegradable) and tea leaves
Garden clippings
Seaweed – rinsed
Corn stalks
Juice pulp
Egg shells
Yard clippings from pruning
Garden plants
Fruit and vegetable kitchen scraps

BROWNS (Carbon)

Dry leaves
Wood, bark, shavings, twigs, sawdust, and wood ashes
Nuts and nut shells
Pine cones and needles
Straw
Potting soil
Shredded white paper
Shredded brown cardboard
Dead houseplants
Old grains and breads in small quantities
Paper grocery bags

DO NOT COMPOST:

Weeds-avoid invasive weeds that have gone to seed because most weed seeds can survive a normal composting process
Coal ash because it contains high levels of sulfur and iron. Wood ash only
Colored paper and cardboard
Diseased plants
Meat, bones and fish
Inorganic materials – aluminum, glass, plastic
Pet feces
Any plants or grass treated with pesticide or herbicide
Walnut and black walnut products
Dairy
Glossy paper
Salt other than a normal amount used in cooking

Problem

Rotten egg smell
Ammonia smell
Temperature flux

Pests around pile
Slow decomposition
Dry pile

What's Going On

Excess moisture and not enough air
Excess nitrogen rich material
Pile size, moisture, or circulation issues

Smell is attracting animals
Pile isn't changing /unbalanced conditions
Powdery or flaky appearance

Solution

Turn pile
Add carbon and turn pile
If the pile is too hot: reduce size and turn pile
Too cold: increase size, aeration and moisture
Add more brown, turn pile, keep covered with a lid or a tarp
Add coffee ground, do squeeze test for moisture
Add moisture, turn pile and add moisture until consistency or a damp sponge

