

# A RECIPE FOR COMPOST

Composting is easy if you remember the recipe:

Making compost takes some care; add **greens**, **browns**, **water** and **air**.

**Green ingredients** (fruit and vegetable scraps, bread, rice, pasta, coffee grounds, tea bags, fresh weeds and grass clippings) add **nitrogen**.

**Brown ingredients** (leaves, twigs, wood chips, straw, and old weeds) add **carbon**.



**Nitrogen and carbon**, in proper balance, promote growth and energy in the bacteria and fungi that break down organic matter. Ideal compost is about two parts brown for every one part green ingredients.

Besides **bacteria and fungi**, **invertebrates** such as mites, millipedes, beetles, sowbugs, earwigs, earthworms, slugs, and snails help break down the materials in the compost. All of them need oxygen and moisture to do their jobs effectively. Material in the composter should be piled loosely. If it's too compacted, air can't flow through. Too much water makes air flow difficult, too. Keep compost moist but not soaking wet.



Common earthworm-Joseph Berger, Bugwood.  
Dusky slug-Gary Berman, USDA APHIS, Bugwood.org  
Centipede-Gary Alpert, Harvard University, Bugwood.org

## Composting Indoors

For indoor composting, a worm bin (vermicomposting) is a great option and small enough to fit under the kitchen sink. Worms, typically a species know as "red wigglers" (*Eisenia fetida*) break down organic material along with microscopic organisms, bacteria and fungi. Red wigglers can eat half of their body weight in food scraps and other organics every day! They're a good way to compost fruit and vegetable scraps.



## Composting No-No's

Some things simply should not go into compost. They may take too long to break down, attract unwanted animals, or make the compost undesirable. Don't put meat, fish, bones, dairy or fatty foods (cheese, salad dressing, leftover cooking oil) into compost. Dog and cat droppings don't belong either. Diseased plants and those with lots of seeds also are unsuitable.

Learn more about composting in your backyard and indoors at [www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8799.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8799.html) DEC's Composting at Home webpage.