



My Sustainability: Composting

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April 2020

My family's big on composting. In fact, my parents have had a composter longer than they have had me! But I'm getting ahead of myself.

When I think of sustainability around the house, I think of recycling, minimizing waste, avoiding plastic (that's hard!) considering where products come from (and where they *go* when we're through with them), and I try to eat smartly, and think about the impact of growing or raising my food on the environment.

I know that all solid waste eventually goes to landfills, and I also know that everything we can do to limit that is good for the environment. We limit *our* solid waste by composting.

With this project, I want to show you how it's done!

Compost is this: decayed organic material. It makes great fertilizer for plants!

Composting is simply making compost, which decreases waste.

Step 1. On our kitchen counter we keep a small bin to collect everything that can go into our composter. This includes egg shells, banana peels, coffee grounds, paper towels, carrot peelings, apple cores, and more. If it will rot, you can compost it!





Step 2. When the small bin is full, it goes outside and sits in a small bucket until the weekend.

We keep a lid on the bucket, and hold that down with a weight. If we don't, we get all kinds of visitors... raccoons, skunks, opossums and even coyotes. Seems our waste could be someone else's dinner!

This is also a good chance to make sure that only compostable items go in to the mix.

Step 3. Once a week, we bring the bucket down to the backyard, where the composter is, and load it up.

We use a barrel composter, but there are lots of different types. The barrel composter is a barrel that sits on rollers so it can be spun. The spinning mixes the contents and makes things decompose more quickly. It also helps prevent big lumps and uneven compost.

The warmer the weather the faster the compost gets made.





Step 4. About once each month, we add Compost Accelerator. This is a powder that includes microbes that assist with the breakdown of organic materials.

Organics don't need an accelerator, of course. Things are decomposing without our help all around us all the time.

Have you ever walked through a garden and seen old leaves that have sat for a long time, like over the winter? If it's wet, they've turned to mush, right? Those mushy old leaves, mixed with a lot of other decayed organic material is compost.

Step 5. Spin!

The barrel can get heavy, but it's important to spin it once a week, or so.

This mixes everything well, exposes the bacteria and decaying material to air, and makes the whole mix healthier.

As things decay, they release water and this makes a soupy mix. There are drain holes in the barrel that allow the moisture to drip out and accumulate in the base. This can be used as a liquid fertilizer that some call "compost tea". Sounds tasty, huh?





Step 6. Harvest time!

Depending on the temperature and the contents, it can take several weeks to go from recognizable food scraps to rich, dark loamy compost.

It can then be used around the garden. Here, I'm mixing it in at the base of our cherry tree.

It feels good to do good for the planet. And we can all do our part! One banana peel at a time!

Thanks!

Good luck if you take this on! It's easy!

