

The Seattle Composter User Guide



Why compost yard waste in your backyard?

Because it's a simple, cost effective way to recycle yard waste, and makes a great soil builder for your urban garden. Your homemade compost will help you grow a healthy landscape that needs less water, pesticides, and fertilizer.

For Seattle city residents
Seattle Composters
and Green Cones are available from
the Seattle Conservation Corps 206.684.0190

Using compost
is the best way to build healthy soil!

Yard waste composting Dos and Don'ts

☒ Please Do Compost:

Grass clippings
Leaves
Dead plants
Plant stalks
Weeds parts without seeds
Prunings up to pencil
diameter.

☒ Please Do Not Compost:

Weed seeds
Diseased plants
Plants with thorns
Lawn clippings or plants
treated with weed
or insect killers
Invasive plants like ivy,
morning glory,
and blackberries.

☒ No pet waste

☒ No food waste!

☒ Rats may chew into
your Seattle Composter
if they smell food in it.
Instead use a rodent-resistant
worm bin or a food digester
like a Green Cone to
compost your food waste
in your backyard.

Call the Natural Lawn &
Garden Hotline to learn more
about solutions for rodent
issues 206.633.0224, [info@
lawnandgardenhotline.org](mailto:info@lawnandgardenhotline.org)



The Natural Soil Building Program
is sponsored by Seattle Public Utilities and
managed by the Seattle Tilth Association.

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Seattle
Public
Utilities

For more information on composting please
call the Natural Lawn & Garden Hotline at
206.633.0224 or email them at:
info@lawnandgardenhotline.org

Where to locate your Seattle Composter

Photo 1: Choose a shady, level spot—18 inches away from any structure and away from the perimeter of your property.



How to assemble your Seattle Composter

- ⌘ The green sheet will become the bin wall.
- ⌘ **Photo 2:** Insert the bolts through the holes on one end of the wall with the flat bolt head on the inside surface and secure with rubber washers to hold bolts in place.
- ⌘ **Photo 3:** Bring wall ends together, lining up the 4 holes and 4 bolts on each end of wall. The wing nuts work best on the outside wall surface for easy removal.
- ⌘ **Photo 4:** Place the bolts through the holes and fasten the wing nuts forming a round cylinder.
- ⌘ The black top and bottom lids are interchangeable. Place one lid on a flat, leveled area.
- ⌘ **Photo 5:** Set the green cylinder on the lid and cover with remaining lid.



Using your Seattle Composter

- ⌘ **Photo 6:** For best results, mix 50% “greens” (grass clippings and green plant material) with 50% “browns” (fall leaves, dried plants, and twigs).
- ⌘ **Photos 7 & 8:** Chopping up large debris will speed up the break down/composting process.
- ⌘ **Photo 9:** Load yard waste materials—leaves, grass clippings, small twigs and plant matter—into bin.



- ⌘ **Photo 10:** Add water—keep yard waste materials as moist as a wrung out sponge.
- ⌘ It is easiest to fill the bin in sections: greens, browns, water, mix, water, mix; greens, browns, water, mix, water, mix; repeating until bin is full.
- ⌘ **Photo 11:** When the bin is full, cover yard waste materials with a sheet of cardboard, burlap bag, or a large plastic bag to keep moisture from evaporating.
- ⌘ Put lid on the bin.
- ⌘ Regular turning of the material will keep it aerated and speed up the composting process. (See “hot” composting on next page.)



For easy composting “Let Compost Happen.”

Fill your Seattle Composter as described above. Be sure to keep the materials moist while you wait for bacteria and fungi to break down your yard waste. Adding water to the top of the pile works well. You will have finished compost in 6 to 12 months.

For fast “Hot” composting
You will need to turn your compost pile

For easy turning disassemble your bin

- ⌘ Take the top lid off and place on the ground next to your current compost bin.
- ⌘ Photo 12: Carefully remove wing nuts to disassemble sides, (See Photo 3) and unwrap the wall from the compost.
- ⌘ Photo 13: Or slide the sides up and over the existing pile without undoing the wingnuts.
- ⌘ Your partially composted yard waste will be freestanding.
- ⌘ Reassemble the wall on the empty bottom lid.
- ⌘ Photo 14: Move the partially composted yard waste material from the freestanding pile into the reassembled bin.
- ⌘ As you fill the newly assembled bin, move the materials that were next to the wall to the middle and the middle materials next to the wall.
- ⌘ Photo 15: Be sure to fluff the materials to add air.
- ⌘ Photo 16: Check water content and add water as needed.
- ⌘ Rinse off the bottom lid, which will now become the top lid.
- ⌘ You have completed the “turning” process.
- ⌘ Repeat 3 to 4 times for finished “hot” compost in 3 to 6 months.

Harvesting your finished compost

- ⌘ Finished compost should be crumbly, brown, and smell earthy, like the forest floor. It is now ready to harvest and use.
- ⌘ Lift the top lid, carefully remove the wing nuts, and unwrap the wall from the compost.
- ⌘ Harvest the finished compost.
- ⌘ Reassemble the bin.
- ⌘ If there are any unfinished materials, return them to the bin to finish composting.
- ⌘ Make more!

Use your compost!

- ⌘ Apply as a “mulch” on top of the soil surface around your plants and shrubs.
- ⌘ Dig compost into soil when planting.
- ⌘ Rake a thin layer (¼”) into lawns to build the soil.

