



Joe Van Rossum

Home composting is an easy and inexpensive way to create a valuable soil amendment from yard and household waste. Composting means less waste going into the landfill and less need for chemical fertilizers.

While many people simply pile their compost in a heap, others may want to use a bin to contain their compost and speed up the composting process. Compost bins vary in size, use, and cost, whether you purchase a commercial product or build one yourself. This publication, from a series of do-it-yourself plans, provides you with all you need to know to build your very own compost bin.

For more information look under Resources at the end of this publication.

WOOD PALLET COMPOSTER

Wood pallets can make inexpensive and durable compost bins (figure 1). Used pallets are often available from local businesses, manufacturers, or landfills. This bin can be used as a holding or turning unit. To use it as a turning unit, unhook the sides, set up the composter next to the existing pile, and then transfer the materials to the empty bin.

Cost: About \$30

Capacity: Eight to ten 30-gallon bags of yard materials

Degree of difficulty: ☆ Little or no building skills needed

How to construct

MATERIALS

- Four wooden pallets (five if you want a bottom for the bin), sized to make a four-sided container at least 3 x 3 x 3'
- Eight large hook-and-eye gate latches (bolt latches, rope, or bailing wire are also options)
- Level
- Shovel
- Work gloves

CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

1 Level the ground where the pallet bin will sit.

2 Connect four pallets with hooks and eyes or bolt latches to make a four-sided bin at least 3 x 3 x 3'. (The pallets can also be tied or wired together.)

3 (Optional.) A fifth pallet may be used as a base to allow more air to get into the pile and to increase the bin's stability. However, this base pallet will decompose faster than the sides and make it more difficult to turn the bottom of the pile.

FIGURE 1. Wood pallet composter



Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center

Building skills needed:

☆ Little or none ☆☆ Some ☆☆☆ Above-average

DO-IT-YOURSELF COMPOST BINS

Now you are ready to start using your bin and begin composting! Simply mix one part green (nitrogen) materials with two parts brown (carbon) materials (table 1), keep the materials as damp as a wrung-out sponge, and use a small shovel, pitchfork, or garden fork to mix the contents from time to time.



TABLE 1. Materials for composting

Brown materials (2 parts)	Green materials (1 part)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry leaves • Twigs less than ¼" in diameter • Shredded newspaper • Shredded household cardboard: egg cartons, paper towel, and toilet paper rolls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green leaves • Grass clippings • Weeds (before they have gone to seed) • Leftover plants at the end of the season • Coffee grounds • Fruit and vegetable scraps • Eggshells
<p>Do not compost: Meat, bones, grease, whole eggs, dairy products, diseased or highly invasive plants, pet waste.</p>	

Resources

For more information on composting, including the Wisconsin Master Composter Program, contact:

Solid & Hazardous Waste Education Center (SHWEC)

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Composting to Reduce the Waste Stream (NRAES-43)
 Plants and Life Sciences Publishing (PALS), Cornell Cooperative Extension
http://palspublishing.cals.cornell.edu/nra_order.taf?_function=detail&pr_booknum=nraes-43

Master Composter Resource Manual
 Cornell Waste Management Institute
cwmi.css.cornell.edu/mastercompostermanual.pdf

These publications are available from the Learning Store (learningstore.uwex.edu):

Compost (A4021)

Do-It-Yourself Compost Bins series

- Barrel Composter (G4020-01)
- Can Composter (G4020-02)
- Concrete Block Composter (G4020-03)
- Wire Mesh Composter (G4020-04)
- Wood and Wire Composter (G4020-05)
- Wood Pallet Composter (G4020-06)
- Wood 3-Bin Composter (G4020-07)



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Do-It-Yourself Compost Bins: Wood Pallet (G4020-06)