

# COMPOST

Compost is *organic material*—such as leaves, fruits and veggies—that has been *decomposed*, or broken down into smaller parts. Compost helps give nutrients to the soil, and helps make new plants grow. You can recycle leaves and other plant materials at home by setting up a compost bin!

## Recipe for Compost

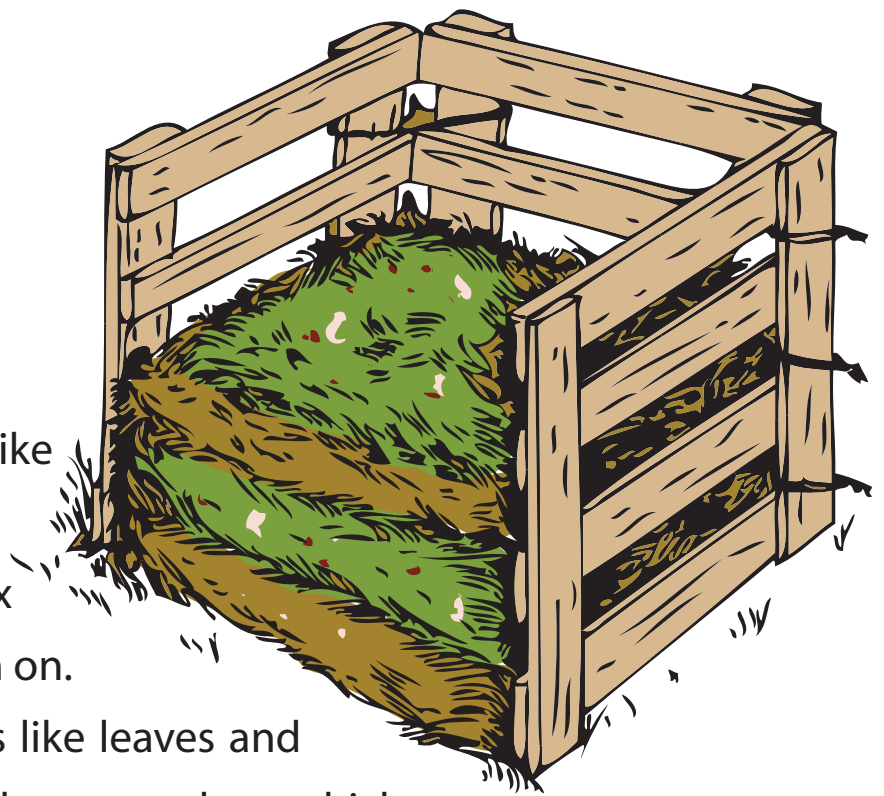
- Brown stuff**
- Green stuff**
- Air**
- Water**

The microorganisms (tiny living things, like bacteria or fungus) that recycle leaves and other plant parts need an even mix of brown stuff and green stuff to munch on.

**Brown stuff** is dead, dried plant parts like leaves and pine needles. Brown stuff is high in the element carbon, which will help provide energy to this mix.

**Green stuff** is fresh, living parts like grass clippings, kitchen vegetable scraps, weeds and other plants. Green stuff is high in the element nitrogen, which helps produce more protein.

**Air and water** are two key ingredients to help the microorganisms in the compost to live and work. The material in your compost bin cannot work if it is sealed off from any air or water source.



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## Good Compost Conditions

### **Selecting a spot**

Find a nice spot in the yard to start your compost pile. It should be out of the way but easy to reach with plenty of room to work around. Some good places would be near your garden or in a back corner of the yard. It is also a good idea to choose a location close to a source of water.

**TIP:** Some people like to keep a mini compost bin in their kitchen to collect scraps of fruit and veggie peels, eggshells, coffee grounds and other kitchen waste. This is a great way to recycle kitchen trash that you normally throw away!

### **Building your compost pile**

It's easiest to build a compost pile in layers of ingredients. Start with the brown stuff by spreading a layer of old leaves or pine needles about 6 inches thick. Next, add the green stuff, including grass clippings and scraps from your mini kitchen waste bin. Finally, sprinkle a shovelful of soil to add microorganisms into the pile.

### **Speeding up the process**

The microorganisms in the compost take a long time to break down the organic material. If you want faster compost, you can mix the ingredients every few weeks. This is not necessary, but it can help the process.

### **Your Compost Pile**

How big is your pile? \_\_\_\_\_

What does it smell like? \_\_\_\_\_

What kinds of things are in your compost?  
\_\_\_\_\_

