

Composting 101

The Basics of Good Compost

First Edition



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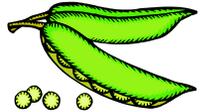
Compost, it's such a wonderful thing. The following article touches on five basic guidelines that everyone should follow when they first start composting.

Keep Your Microbes Happy

The success of any compost pile is completely dependent upon the life within it. Your [compost ingredients](#) breakdown because of the microbial (e.g. bacteria and fungi) activity in your compost pile. When happy, these microbes repeatedly consume, digest, and excrete your composting materials into more plant-friendly food. The more microbes you have in your compost, the faster it breaks down, and the better the end-product. The key to the successful breakdown of your pile, lies in keeping your microbes happy. But How do you do that?

Fed Your Microbes Right

Your composting microbes need specific foods. Just like us, they like a nice balanced diet. If you feed them too much of one ingredient, they'll rebel (in the form of an unpleasant odor, or simply going on vacation, and stopping the breakdown of your pile). You've probably seen the lists of what to, and what not to, feed your microbes, but if not, please go [here](#). We would just like to add one more critical piece of advice – Before trying to feed your microbes, please make sure they're there to feed. Be sure to add a couple shovelfuls of garden soil to your compost pile while you build it. This will help inoculate it.



Keep Your Microbes Moist

Just like humans, your microbes need access to water. Water is a critical element used for their digestion, communication, and transportation within your compost. Compost microbes thrive in an environment of approximately 40-60% moisture. Now, you don't have to run out and buy a moisture meter (unless you're really keen), but you should know how to test the moisture level in your pile using the [hand-squeeze test](#).

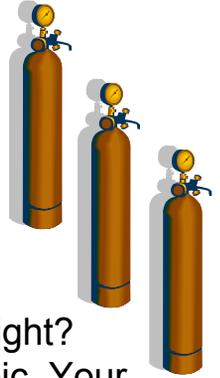
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Allow Your Microbes to Breathe

Oxygen – A critical element to our own personal health, and the health of our composting microbes. Are you starting to see the wonderful similarities between their needs and ours? Pretty simple, isn't it?

Have you ever gotten a whiff of a compost pile and it just didn't smell right? Chances are that it didn't have enough oxygen, and has done anaerobic. Your compost microbes need oxygen, and the best way to ensure they get it is by following three important points.

1. Ensure you use the right ingredients in your compost pile.
2. Don't over water – The more water in your pile, the less space for air.
3. Turn your pile regularly.



Give Your Microbes TLC

In conclusion, your compost microbes are your free work force in your pile. The better you treat them, the happier they'll be, and the harder they'll work. They'll even work through the night, 24/7, 365 days a year...can't say many employees would ever do that for free, could you?

With a little tender loving care, your microbes will be happy, and soon enough you'll be producing mountains of nature's finest garden fertilizer.

If you have any composting questions, please [write to us](#) or post them on our [FAQ page](#). Remember, we can't become the Web's biggest tribe of compost enthusiasts without your help, so please visit us again soon.