

Build Your Own Outdoor Compost Bin

A cost-effective way to build your own compost bin using welded wire fencing

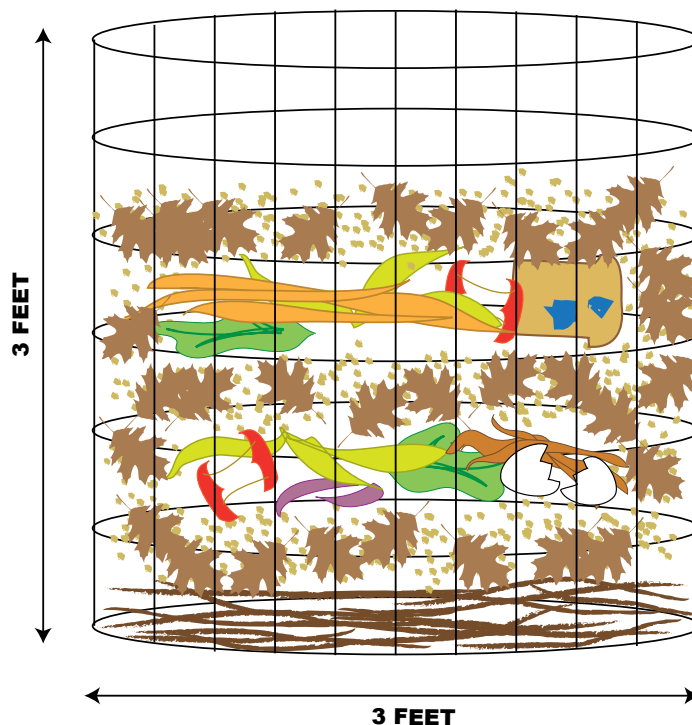


What You Need

- 12 feet of 36-inch tall welded wire fencing. Mesh should be 1" x 2" or smaller.
- Ties to fasten the cylinder closed. Use short lengths of wire, plastic coated twist ties, or nylon string
- Twigs and branches
- Nitrogen-rich "green" material: food scraps (excluding meat, dairy, fats, and oils), fresh grass clippings, weeds (not laden with seeds), coffee grounds
- Carbon-rich "brown" material: straw, dried leaves, woodchips, sawdust, shredded paper, pine needles (pine needles should not make up more than 10% of the total material in the pile)

Assembly and Use of Your Welded Wire Compost Bin

1. Cut the ends of the fencing close to a crosswire and then file them down until they are no longer sharp. Or, cover the ends with two layers of duct tape.
2. Wrap the fencing into a cylinder that is 3 feet wide. Tie the ends closed.
3. Place your new compost bin in a spot that is shady, convenient, level and has good drainage.
4. Place a layer of twigs and branches in the bottom of the bin. These coarse materials will allow air to flow through your pile.
5. Add a 6-inch layer of brown material on top of the twigs and branches.
6. Add a 2-inch layer of green material on top of the brown material. Keep the green material away from the edges of the bin.
7. Add another 6-inch layer of brown material. Always bury green material under brown material.
8. Continue layering brown and green materials until your compost bin is full. Each time you add materials, increase air flow in the pile by fluffing it. If materials are dry, add water to keep them damp. Pile should always be damp, but not soggy.
9. To speed up composting time, you can turn the pile so the top becomes the bottom and vice versa. Turning once in spring and once in fall should yield finished compost in a year's time. More frequent turning will allow your compost to finish faster.
10. When your compost looks like rich, brown soil, it is ready to be harvested. To harvest your compost, simply remove the ties and wire fencing. Reassemble your bin, set it in a new spot, and start again.



Troubleshooting

Problem	Probable Cause	Solutions
Pile has a bad odor like vinegar or rotten eggs	Not enough oxygen, too wet	Turn the pile and add course dry materials like leaves or straw to soak up excess moisture. Cover pile with a tarp to protect it from rain
	Not enough oxygen, compacted	Turn the pile and shake the materials apart to aerate
Pile has a bad odor like ammonia	Too many green materials	Add more brown materials
Pile is attracting rats, dogs, raccoons, flies, or other pests	Inappropriate food scraps added	Do not add meat, fat, bones, or other animal by-products
Pile contains slugs or other insects	Pile is composting correctly. Insects are a sign of a productive compost pile.	Keep doing what you're doing!
Matted, undecomposed layers of leaves or grass clippings	Poor aeration, compaction	Break up or shred layers, then re-layer the pile. Avoid adding heavy layers of unshredded leaves, grass clippings, hay or paper
Large, undecomposed items	Items are too large	Remove these items, chop them up so they are smaller in size, and use them in a new pile. In the future, chop up large items.