



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.



Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center

WIRE MESH COMPOSTER

Wire mesh composting bins are inexpensive and easy to assemble, and they hold a large volume of yard materials (figure 1). Use hardware cloth wire for a sturdy bin that holds its shape. This bin can be used as a holding or turning unit. To use it as a holding unit, undo the latches or ties, set the bin up next to the pile, and transfer the composting materials back into the empty bin. Stakes can be added for additional stability, but this will make it harder to move the bin and harvest the finished compost.

Cost: About \$75

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

Degree of difficulty: ☆ Little or no building skills needed

How to construct

MATERIALS

- 36" wide ½" hardware cloth, 12½'
- Four metal or plastic clips or wire ties
- Three to four metal posts, 4' (optional)
- Heavy-duty wire or tin snips
- Pliers
- Hammer
- Metal file
- Work gloves
- Level

CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

Roll out and cut 12½' of hardware cloth. Snip the ends off of the hardware cloth close to a cross wire. Then file down the sharp edges to make it easy to clip together and avoid snagging hands. Bend the hardware cloth into a circle and overlap the ends of the fencing over each other. Attach clips or ties and set the bin in a level place. (Optional: Place metal stakes evenly around the inside edge of the bin and hammer them into place.)

FIGURE 1. Wire mesh composter



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: Wire Mesh Composter (G4020-04)