

Making good thermal, aerobic compost.

(based on soil food web methods of Dr Elaine Ingham)



Requirements:

- About 4 metres of wire mesh @ 75mm x 50mm mesh 1200mm wide and 3D shackles or wire to tie ends together.
- Small tarp to cover top to keep rain out and heat in.
- Perennial plants require fungal dominated compost and compost tea.
- **Recipe:**
50% woody/brown material; ie. Sticks, twigs, small branches, wood chips, wood shavings, sawdust, newspapers, cardboard dry leaves and straw. (Small branches are good and place at the bottom of the pile) Straw and wood chips are the easiest to get in bulk whilst the other components can be smaller quantities.

25-30% green material; ie Grass hay, weeds (dandelion, nettles, mallows are really good) vegetable waste, flowers, herbs cuttings (especially comfrey, yarrow, tansy & borage). Casuarina needles, coffee grounds, silage, seaweed, and bamboo. For greens; grass, silage and hay can be bulk materials

25-30% manure. ie High nitrogen material: Cow, horse chook, pig or sheep manures etc. feathers & hair as well as chaffs such as lucerne, clover, pea, bean, vetch and wattle leaves including seed pods.

Blood & Bone or blood and fish meal are good as are Dynamic lifter pellets.

Other ingredients that can be added: Granite dust, basalt dust, rock phosphate, zeolite powder, egg shells and charcoal.

Fish emulsion, Charlie carp, seasol liquids can also be added.

- To start a pile: measure out approximately into piles your starting materials in the proportions you need.
- Start layering the pile/ring in proportions of materials ie woody = green + manure. If using the ring then make each complete layer 20cm (10cm woody + 10cm green and manure).

- Press down heavily by walking on the layer. Water well to get water content over 50%. Add next complete layer (woody, green, manure) press down and water.
- Continue until pile/ring is completely full. Water again very well.
- Open the ring and mix all the layers together – this gives a final 50% woody well mixed with green and manure.
- Rebuild the pile/ring by forking the mixture in and pressing down regularly.
- Water one more time. Cover with cardboard to reduce drying.
- Take temperature in several places up the centre of the core within 24 hours.
- When temperature reaches around 55-60C, break the pile/ring and turn the outside to the inside and remake the pile.
- Continue to do this until the pile stabilises at ambient.
- To meet standards the pile needs to be turned 5 times in 15 days (if you are using it yourselves, do not worry about this).
- **NB. THE PILE MUST REMAIN AEROBIC THE WHOLE TIME AND MOISTURE MUST STAY ABOVE 50%.**

For further information including workshops on making thermal compost, compost tea and using a microscope to understand and view the soil food web microbes, contact:

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