

# Making your own compost

Food Foundations • another NAQ Nutrition program

Compost is a simple and sustainable way to protect the environment. A recent study has found that 60% of the waste that Australians produce could be used as compost in gardens to improve the soil quality.

This activity provides children with an opportunity to learn about how food grows.

## You will need:

- A place outside for your compost that is well drained and well shaded in the hotter months.
- A bin or box with a lid (note: a plastic bin /box needs holes in the bottom for drainage).
- Different types of organic materials including:
  - Nitrogen-rich materials (green plant waste) such as:
    - fruit and vegetable scraps
    - green waste such as fresh leaves
  - Carbon-rich materials (brown plant waste) such as:
    - dry leaves
    - sawdust
    - woody twig clippings
    - paper
    - wood ash
    - straw and dry grass.
- Great compost also needs: air; water; micro nutrients and time.



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## What you do:

1. Fill the bottom of your bin, box or enclosure with coarse material, such as sticks or twigs, to aerate and drain the compost.
2. Build your heap in thin layers (5-10 centimetres. Start with a layer of brown plant waste, then top with a layer of green plant waste. Keep repeating these layers until the bin is full).
3. Sprinkle with soil or finished compost between every few layers to add additional micro-organisms to kick start the breakdown process for the plant waste.
4. Add air by turning the top layers of compost with a garden fork (weekly). Adding extra broken twigs and sticks from time to time also helps air get into the heap.
5. Add water. Your heap should be damp to touch, but not soggy. Check moisture levels every time you turn it, and add water when necessary (usually once a month).
6. When the bin is full, allow 2-3 months for it to mature. Continue to turn on a weekly basis.
7. Your compost is ready when the finished product resembles a rich dark soil – like material.

