



# BLACK GOLD

Composting for beginners  
presented by Nicki Byers



**UF** | IFAS Extension  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

[mastergardener.ifas.ufl.edu](http://mastergardener.ifas.ufl.edu)



## *Composting*

- *Turning garbage into gold*





# History

- Arose from a need to dispose of muck and fertilize the land
- First written account of compost making is set on clay tablets some time between 2320 BC and 2120 BC
- References in the bible to the cultivation of soils
- Also Neolithic and bronze age evidence of composting has been found in Asia, China, and Scotland.
- Greeks, Egyptians and Romans all utilized compost
- Native Americans had several methods of composting
  - Sheet composting
  - Composting while planting
  - Seed balls



# Modern Composting

- F.H. King toured China, Japan, and Korea in the early 1900's and published *Farmers in Forty Centuries* where he describes the use of manures and composts to maintain soil fertility
- Sir Albert Howard is the father of Modern composting and organic farming. He used F.H. King's writing into account when he developed the Indore method
- J.I. Rodale's interest was sparked by Howard and began developing and demonstrating practical and natural methods of rebuilding soil fertility.
- George Washington Carver taught that compost was vital to the fertility of the land and urged farmers to make their own fertilizer



# Why should we compost?

- Adds nutrients to the soil
- Introduces valuable organisms
- Recycles kitchen waste
- Reduces landfill waste
- Saves money
- Good for the planet



# How do I start?

- You need a compost bin
- Put it in a shady area that is discrete –
- A wire bin is sufficient. Commercial bins produce the same results.
- Use up to 3 bins simultaneously
- A small household collection bin





# Outdoor Bin Designs

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Alachua County  
Public Works Office  
5620 NW 120<sup>TH</sup> Lane  
Gainesville, FL 32653  
352-374-5245





Cooking/idle



Ready to harvest



Active/working

## 3 Bin System





3 wire composting bins



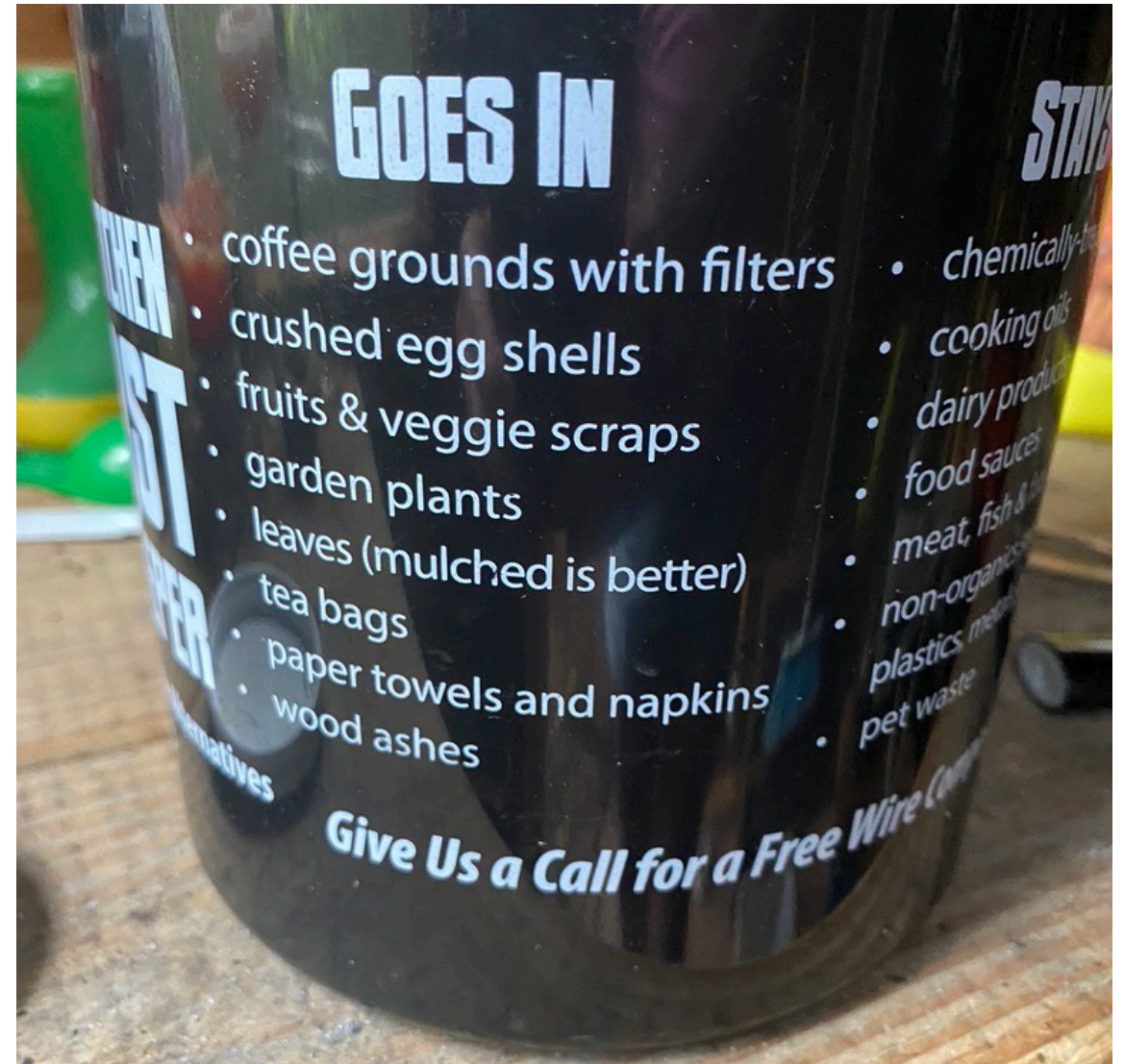


NOW WHAT?  
START COLLECTING YOUR COMPOST  
MAKING MATERIALS

# Greens/ Nitrogen

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- Fruit and vegetable scrapes
- Egg shells
- Tea bags
- Coffee grounds and filters
- Yard trimmings and grass clippings
- Fireplace ashes
- Green garden plants and vegetables



# Things You Can Compost

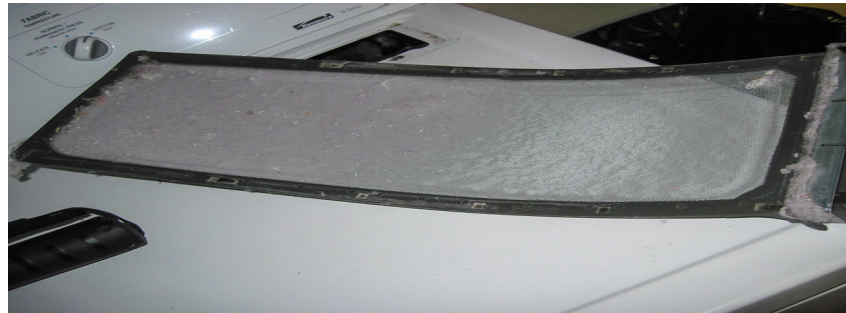




# Browns/ Carbons

- Leaves- Oak, magnolia
- Pine needles
- Twigs small branches
- Straw or hay
- Sawdust
- Shredded paper
- Dryer lint
- Corrugated cardboard





# Things You Can't Compost



# What not to compost

Meat, fish, egg or poultry scraps

Dairy

Fats, oils, grease

Coal or coal ash

Diseased or infested plant material

Pet waste

Yard trimmings treated with pesticides

Invasive plants



# Let's make some compost!!

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- It takes approximately 2 years to make your first batch of compost
- Simply start layering green and brown elements in your outside bin
- “The Ratio” 3/1 carbon to nitrogen ratio or 3 parts green to 1 parts brown
- Turn as needed
- Monitor the temperature. Ideally between 122°F in 131°F
- Keep moist– water if needed



# Troubleshooting

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## Odors-

Placing meat, dairy oils into pile

Rotten egg smell– anerobic

turn – add leaves/browns

## Ammonia

high nitrogen

turn – cut back on greens add browns

## New piles won't heat up

be patient – if you have less than a cubic yard  
of material, it may not heat up



# Harvesting compost



- Use a screen to sift out large sticks and roots
- Set up a receptacle to hold your fresh compost
- Wheelbarrow
- Rubbermaid with lid
- Harvest as needed
- Store in a cool dry place – use soon



# Tools



- Sifting screen
  - 18' x 26' with  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch squares
- Pitchfork
- Shovel
- container









40 pounds of  
compost

# Why Compost in the Garden?

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Soil additive/ amendment

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It will improve the structure and overall health of your soil

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Helps retain moisture

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Increases earthworm activity

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Increases “good” microbial population



## Poor soil

Heavy, clay like – poor drainage

Sandy soil – does not hold water

Acidic or alkaline

Compacted roots

Poor bacteria counts



# How it improves soil

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- Improves soil structure by boosting cation exchange capacity(CEC)
- Compost improves the mobility of air water and nutrients in the soil
- This makes nutrients more readily available to the plants



[Watch the Trailer](#)

[Screen](#)

NARRATED BY  
**WOODY HARRELSON**

# KISS THE GROUND

THE  
SOLUTION IS  
RIGHT UNDER  
OUR FEET

**DAVID  
ARQUETTE**

**GISELE  
BÜNDCHEN**

**ROSARIO  
DAWSON**

**JASON  
MRAZ**

**IAN  
SOMERHALDER**

# Alternate ways to compost

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- 2 FREE drop off locations
- SW 4<sup>th</sup> Ave and 3<sup>rd</sup> St (behind dumpster)
- 231 NW 10<sup>TH</sup> Ave (behind Afternoon)
  
- Bucket Swap – Wednesdays 4-7  
302 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Ave  
\$20/ season(3 months)

More information

[beatenpathcompost@gmail.com](mailto:beatenpathcompost@gmail.com)







**beatenpathcompost** • Following

Gainesville, Florida



**beatenpathcompost** Compost is looking good this morning. Its almost time to set a few yards into the shade to cure it for a few folks come fall. Why set in the shade you ask? So that the temperature of the compost drops, allowing more invertebrates such as worms to start working through it along with fungus. This leads to the compost transitioning to a more finished, hummus material.



Liked by **cyberjoedaddy** and others

2 DAYS AGO

Add a comment...

Post

# Student compost cooperative

- SCC open door policy
- Free
- Always open
- Will provide you with a container
- Located at UF Energy Research and Education Park
- More information
- [Biogas.ifas.ufl.edu](http://Biogas.ifas.ufl.edu)



# Compost Sharing Etiquette

- Only the purest of materials
- Share frequently – at least once a week
- Do not put in plastic bags or use bags as “liners”
- Freeze if possible – makes for easier transferring





In reality, plants are actually farming us, by giving us oxygen daily, until we all eventually decompose so they can consume us.



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