



# An easy guide to better composting

Just follow these four simple principles to create great compost:

## 1. Aeration

Aerobic decomposition involves the break-down of organic materials by micro-organisms which thrive in an oxygen rich environment. Aerobic decomposition can be assisted by placing materials in your compost such as small twigs and mulched garden matter. Turning over the materials in your compost with a garden fork on a fortnightly basis will also assist. If the compost is maintained with a regular fortnightly “turn” it is not necessary to “layer” the materials. Make sure if you use a compost bin, that it is placed on well-drained soil. Remember, well managed compost will have a rich earthy smell.



## 2. Diversity

Place as many diverse materials in your compost as possible. As a rule of thumb, you can place any materials in your compost which were once part of a plant or animal, including:

- Food scraps
- Bread
- Paper tea bags and ground coffee
- Small amounts of soiled paper or cardboard like pizza boxes (up to 10% volume)
- Wood ash from a fire (once completely cool)
- Cow or chicken manure (No pet waste)
- Egg shells
- Garden prunings (cut up into small pieces)
- Soil which can also be sprinkled on to assist with the break down process.



Remember when you add vegetables, etc. to chop them into smaller pieces - this increases their surface area and will help them to break down faster!

### 3. Aliveness

Aliveness is simply achieved through the micro-organisms within the compost (the heat from their bodies builds up within the heap). In time worms will also help with the breakdown process. An initial sprinkle of soil or matured compost will provide the much needed micro-organisms. It is also a good idea to place your compost bin in a position which enjoys some sunshine.



### 4. Moisture

Your compost may need a sprinkle of water on occasions to maintain a certain level of moisture likened to a damp “wrung out” sponge. A dry compost heap will never break down, whereas too much water will take up the air spaces.



### Other Helpful Hints

Remember, turning a heap regularly improves aeration and the composting process. This will accelerate the process, is easy once you have a fluffy heap (and only takes a minute or two each week). A good guide is to turn your heap weekly for the first four weeks and then fortnightly thereafter. Compost Activators will also speed up the process but are not essential.

If you are just re-discovering your compost, it is a good idea to avoid placing any meat or large amounts of dairy products in your compost until you get more experience.

