

Basic Compost Recipe

For most crops in typical soil, we need compost where bacteria dominate, so make it from a preponderance of green materials. You need a mix of 25 percent high-nitrogen ingredients, 45 percent green ingredients, and 30 percent woody material. High-nitrogen materials include manure and legumes, such as alfalfa, pea, clover, or bean plant residues. Grass clippings from the first two or three cuttings in spring, when the blades are lush and tender, qualifies as high-nitrogen; the rest of the season, they are simply green material. Green material includes any green plant debris, kitchen scraps, and coffee grounds, which, although brown in color, contains sugars and proteins that bacteria love. Woody material includes wood chips, sawdust, paper plates and towels, and shredded newspaper.

When making compost, measure your ingredients by volume. Try to mix a whole pile at a time. To get it up to temperature and keep it there, you need a mass that measures at least one cubic yard. Moisten the pile as you make it so that it is damp but not wet. An easy way to tell is to pick up a handful of the material and squeeze it as hard as you can; only one or two drops can be squeezed out. Less than that, add water; more than that, let it dry out.

Having livestock, hay fields and pastures is where the majority of my ingredients come from. The coffee grounds and shredded paper I bring home from work. I placed empty plastic coffee cans with lids in the break room near the coffee brewer and get about 4 – 5 filled a week. Starbuck's is really into recycling so if there is one nearby, you might drop in ask the manger about getting their's? The paper is from huge reports that are printed off the computer system that become outdated when

replaced by a newer version. They are already strip shredded, but I like to break it down even more through the chipper/shredder. If a crosscut paper shredder is used that really would not be needed. I obtain the bean hulls from a local farmer's market, during the picking season, when the shelling machines are in full operation.