

# Composting

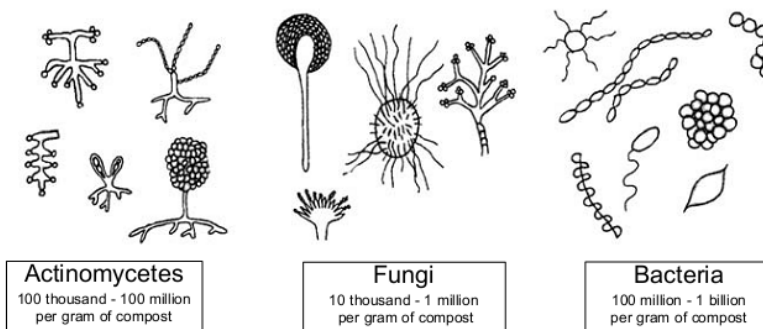
Composting creates the conditions in which the natural process of decomposition thrive. The important factors in compost are Aliveness; Diversity; Air; and Moisture; or the acronym ADAM.



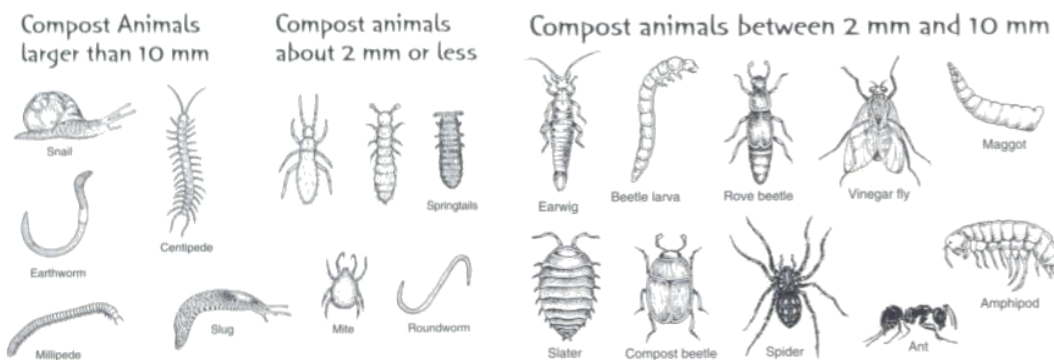
## A. Aliveness (Animals)

*Composting is a process where micro and microorganisms will consume and excrete the compost material turning into a natural fertiliser. The bulk of the decomposition is done by the microscopic life like fungi and bacteria.*

COMPOST MICROORGANISMS MAGNIFIED 1,000 TIMES



*You will find a diverse range of compost critters in your compost pile if the conditions are right. Slaters, beetles, fly larvae, worms, cockroaches and spiders will often be seen in the compost, so do not be alarmed. If other animals, like rats or pets, are visiting your bin, make sure you are not adding things like meats, breads or dairy.*



#### D. Diversity (Diet)

To thrive, compost critters require a diverse range of 'ingredients' to go into your compost. Compost organisms thrive with a good mixture of green nitrogen rich materials and brown carbon rich materials

##### Green – Nitrogen

*Fresh grass clippings*

*Fruit & vegetable scraps*

*Fresh garden clippings*

*Manure*

*Tea leaves / coffee grounds*

*Hair*

*Vacuum cleaner dust*

*Citrus peels (if frozen first to deactivate acidity)*

##### Brown – Carbon

*Sticks and twigs*

*Dry grass clippings*

*Straw / sugarcane mulch*

*Dry leaves*

*Egg cartons*

*Newspaper (shredded)*

However, be mindful that some materials will either attract vermin and therefore predators or not break down very well and produce odours.

##### Avoid

*Meats (raw or cooked)*

*Dairy (milk, cheese, yoghurt, cream as examples)*

*Fatty or Oily foods*

*Breads and sweets*

#### A. Air

Compost is an AEROBIC process that means the organisms require oxygen to survive. To help force more air into the compost, mix or aerate the compost once or twice a week to ensure that all layers are nicely aerated. You can use a pitch fork, compost turner or even star picket to make holes and break up the pile.

#### M. Moisture

Likewise, the compost also needs to be moist. About as damp as a wrung out sponge is an ideal moisture levels. You can conduct a 'squeeze test' (pictured) to determine if you have enough or too much moisture.



## Temperature

1. Sunny or partly sunny position
2. Compost should reach approx. 60 c
3. Smaller bins may not reach this temp
4. Place weeds with seeds in black garbage bins in sun for 1-2 days to kill the weeds and seeds

## Time

- ✓ 6-8 weeks – dedicated composter
- ✓ 6-12 months – casual composter

## Harvesting Compost

When compost is ready to use it will be black/brown in colour, smell earthy, be crumbly to touch and cool.

1. Lift the compost bin away from heap
2. Remove non-decomposed materials from the top
3. Remaining pile should be rich compost
4. Place non decomposed materials back into compost bin



## Using Compost

- ✓ Add to garden soil
- ✓ Soil conditioner
- ✓ Top dress lawns
- ✓ Make compost tea

## Troubleshooting Compost

