

*July 1, 2021*

# Composting Programs

There are several ways that Lynnfield residents can participate in composting programs. These include:

- 1) Composting at home and using composted materials for home and garden use
- 2) Food scrap collection at home with collection at the DPW Recycling Yard for **Black Earth Compost** pick-up (program details TBD)
- 3) Food scrap collection at home and curbside collection by **Black Earth Compost**.

**1) Composting at home and using composted materials for home and garden use.** Mass Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) provides a comprehensive webpage on composting including videos, infographics and how-to's for home composting. <https://www.mass.gov/lists/home-composting-green-landscaping#backyard-composting> .

## Here are the General Tips for Composting at Home

### 1. Locating Your Composter:

- Your compost bin should be located in a convenient location to your home preferably in partial shade close to a hose or water source.

### 2. Your composter needs:

- Good air circulation around the bin.
- To be set on bare ground for easy drainage.
- Distance from large trees that tend to steal nutrients.

### 3. Greens and Browns:

- Successful composting depends on the proper mix of green material (Nitrogen) and brown material (Carbon), mixed into the composter in the proper combination. The ideal combination of the two is 2-parts green to 1-part brown. A good tip is to stockpile green and brown material until it is needed.

### 4. Sources:

- Browns (Carbon) Would be found Where?

- Dried materials are generally your source for browns. These include, dried grass and leaves, paper products, straw and hay. Leaves are a particularly good source for carbon when dry and break down much faster when shredded. Just picture a forest floor and the rich dark material that is found there.
- Greens (Nitrogen)
- In most cases greens are green, like grass. But fruit and vegetable spoils and scraps, salads, peelings apple cores, banana skins, onion skins, stale bread, coffee grounds and yes of course grass clippings. But you get the picture.
- Manure is desirable as an activator to heat up the pile and speed the process. The best manure is from grass eaters such as horses, cattle, sheep, goats even rabbits and chickens. (Be cautious with horse manure as it tends to have a lot of weed seed.) To be safe, buy packaged manure at a garden center. Don't compost human, dog or cat wastes (they carry disease).

## 5. Never attempt to Compost:

- Weeds, already gone to seed.
- Ashes, too alkaline, would raise the pH levels to undesirable heights.
- Plastic, metal and glass don't break down.
- BBQ ashes or coals too high in sulfur dioxide can kill your hardworking little worms.
- Meat, grease and bones will only attract rodents and create bad smells which could upset your neighbors or anyone for that matter.
- Contaminated matter.
- Large branches or chunks of wood.
- All dairy products, butter, cheese, oil and dressings.

## 6. Make Your Own Compost Pile!

- With good planning, you should have results in 2 to 3 months.
- **To Begin:** If you have stockpiled browns and greens, it makes the whole process a easier.
- **Foundation:** Start your pile with about three inches of the coarsest material such as straw, hay, small twigs, flower stalks etc. If you chop this material, it will break down faster.
- **Next:** Add about 3-inches of moist, green materials, then the same amount of drier, brown materials and moisten with a fine spray. Repeat this process until you run out of material or fill your bin.
- **And:** As you are building your pile, you may want to add an activator between layers. This activator could be manure, or a commercial activator available in most garden stores.
- **Cover your bin:** To retain moisture and ensure the heat needed for composting, cover your bin. This also keeps small animals out. Be sure you have good airflow around and into the bin.

- **Turn, Turn, Turn:** If you turn your pile every week or so, with a shovel or garden fork, you bring the material from the outside into the middle, where it is hotter and the process speeds up. You also create passages for air and moisture again speeding the process.
- **Check moisture:** Check moisture weekly and add water if needed. The pile should have the consistency of a wrung-out sponge.
- **Wait Patiently:** A compost heap built in this fashion should have results in about 30 to 90 days. The volume will be about half the size you started out with.
- **What's the beautiful earth aroma?:** The compost should have a healthy, "forest-after-a-rainstorm" smell to it. If it doesn't, then re-check the "Make Your Own Pile" section.

## 7. Tips:

- **Smaller is Better....**  
Materials, both brown and green, break down much better when they are broken into smaller pieces. So, you can run a mower over fallen leaves and chop kitchen waste to help speed the process.
- **Pile it on, Pile it on...**  
Try to keep your bin full or near full. If the process is working properly, the contents will shrink by 1/3 in the first week and after several months by 2/3's or more. This is the natural process of composting.
- **Kitchen Bucket...**  
A good idea is to keep a small covered bucket in the kitchen to collect food scraps and cut down on your trips to the composter.
- **When it doesn't smell right...**  
It could be too wet, so just turn the material and add browns. Too many greens, add more browns. Don't add meat, dairy, fish etc.
- **Balance...**  
A healthy balance of greens and browns keeps everything working just right. Be sure to constantly ensure you have the right mixtures of browns and greens.
- **More questions????**  
Check out "Home Composting Made Easy" by Cortesia Press\*. The book packed with each Earth Machine or your local library for additional gardening books and composting tips. Check the Cortesia Press web site at: [www.cortesia.org](http://www.cortesia.org). And don't forget...use that wonderful rich black compost to enrich your lawns, your flower and vegetable gardens. It's nature's way of saying thank you.

## 2) Food scrap collection at home with collection at the DPW Recycling Yard for Black Earth Compost pick-up

*(Program details are TBD)*

### 3) Food scrap collection at home and curbside collection by Black Earth Compost

**Black Earth Compost** is the leading full-service compost company in New England. Black Earth Compost collects food scraps from residents, schools, supermarkets, colleges, and more, all across eastern MA. They are a vertically integrated company that composts the material, returns it to customers and sells it in garden centers across Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. Full program details are here: <https://blackearthcompost.com>