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### Lexington County's Backyard Compost Video & Quiz

Thank you for purchasing a backyard composting bin with Lexington County!

Below you will find several tips and tricks! Here are the links to the video and the quiz to receive a FREE 2 gallon kitchen compost bin kit! *\*Available at Edmund Landfill as supplies last\**

Video Link: <http://bit.ly/LEXCOSCBCV>

Quiz Link: <http://bit.ly/LEXCOSBYCQ>

#### **PART 1: Things to keep in mind when building your backyard compost space:**

1. You can make your own bin using a trash can, plastic tub, wire netting or wood or you can purchase one of several models.
2. A good compost bin allows the compost access to air and allows you to easily rotate or stir the material and to add more material over time.
3. We choose this model bin for several reasons:
  - A. It comes in two large pieces making it easy to transport
  - B. It's quick and easy to assemble
  - C. The top dome snaps onto the lower ring and it comes with pegs to secure into the ground.
  - D. It's about 3 feet tall and 3 feet across and holds 80 gallons (which is the minimum recommended size and works well for a family of four.)
  - E. It's sturdy
  - F. Designed to keep animals and critters out
  - G. It has a sliding door at the front which allows you to remove the finished compost from the bottom of the pile while adding new material through the lid at the top.
  - H. It has a removable (but secured) cap which is good to give it a thorough stir
  - I. It is an affordable model
4. Choosing a good location for your bin is very important. The bin should be placed at least 2 feet from any type of structure including sheds, fences and trees.
5. Place the bin on a level surface and loosen about one inch of soil under the bin so that the compost can connect to the soil.
6. If you choose to use an enclosed compost bin, place 1-2 inches of soil at the bottom of the bin before adding any other material.
7. Once you have your bin set how you would like, be sure to secure it with ground pins.
8. You're ready to start composting!



## PART 2: Making a Healthy Mix of Backyard Compost

- A. There is a 4 ingredient recipe required to make compost:
1. 3 parts **BROWNS** (or sources of carbon)
  2. 1 part **GREENS** (or sources of nitrogen)
  3. **Air**
  4. **Water**

B. **BROWNS include:**

|  |                                       |   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| shredded cardboard                           | Dead house plants                     | saw dust                                    |
| dryer and vacuum cleaner lint                | nut shells                            | shredded newspaper                          |
| wood chips from untreated and unpainted wood | old brush and shrub trimmings         | yard trimmings such as dry leaves and twigs |
| fireplace or wood ash (but not coal ash)     | paper towels, napkins and towel rolls | used potting soil                           |
| hay and straw                                | pine straw (small amounts)            |   |

We recommend keeping a covered container of brown material near your compost bin so that it's quick and easy to cover your greens.

C. **GREENS include:**

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| bread and grains   | green leaves   | old flowers   |
| coffee grounds   | green shrub pruning's  | tea bags (with the tags attached)                                 |
| Coffee & tea paper filters   | house plants   | seaweed   |
| fruits (both cooked and uncooked but limit how many citrus fruits are added) | hair and fur (limited amounts of this as it takes a long time to break down) | manure from herbivores such as chickens, rabbits, cows and horses |
| green grass clippings  | vegetables (either cooked or uncooked)                                       | crushed egg shells  |

- D. **Air**- make sure to turn your compost, but make sure when you are done that no food scraps are visible, as they should be covered in browns to avoid smells and critters.
- E. **Water**- Make sure to place your bin close to a watering source so you can add water to your compost pile to keep it nice and hydrated.



**PART 3: What should I NOT put in my compost pile?**

- Coal ash from briquettes
- Dairy products
- Diseased or infected plants
- Dog, cat or human waste
- Glass
- Meat, bones or seafood scraps
- Metal
- Oils, fats, grease or lard
- Plastic
- Treated or painted wood
- Trimmings toxic to other plants (e.g. black walnut, hemlock)
- Weeds, roots, or seeds

**PART 4: Managing a Backyard Compost System**

Learning what to do in certain situations can be a big time saver! Here are some situations we ran into during the learning process that might help as you develop your compost system!

| PROBLEM   | REASON  | RESOLUTION   |
|---|---|--|
| Rotten egg smell  | Pile likely contains too much water   | Turn the pile and add more browns to make the pile less soggy.   |
| Ammonia smell   | Pile likely either contains too many green ingredients or is not getting enough air   | Turn the pile and add more browns  |
| Not decomposing or not producing enough heat (Below 130 °F) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pile is likely too small</li> <li>2. Material is too dry</li> <li>3. Pile needs more nitrogen</li> <li>4. Pile needs more Oxygen</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue adding new ingredients but follow the recipe of 1 part greens to 3 parts browns</li> <li>2. Add water and turn pile</li> <li>3. Add more greens</li> <li>4. Turn pile more often</li> </ol> |
| Producing too much heat (Above 170°F)                       | Likely too much nitrogen (or green ingredients)   | Add browns and more water; then turn the pile  |
| Flies or gnats around the compost pile                      | Greens are exposed  | Cover the greens with browns so that you can't see them when looking in the top of the bin.  |
| Pile cools below 130 °F before compost is ready             | Material is losing oxygen   | Add greens and turn pile   |



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### PART 5: How do I know when my compost is ready?

It will take about 3 to 6 months, give or take depending on how well you maintain your compost pile and the type of container you use, to produce finished compost. Your compost is ready when:

- ✓ The compost is a rich brown color
- ✓ There are no remnants of food or yard trimmings at the bottom of the pile
- ✓ The pile begins to cool
- ✓ It smells earthy

If you're still not sure, place a small amount in a plastic bag and smell it. Store it for a few days in a dark place and then smell it again. If it smells the same, it's ready. If it smells worse, it needs more time.

### PART 6: What can I use my finished compost for?

- Use it as mulch:
  - ✓ Spread 2-3 inches around plants, trees, and shrubs to help retain moisture.
- Use it on your lawn:
  - ✓ Apply 1-3 inches to your lawn and water it into the soil
  - ✓ Makes healthier soil, helps hold water better and keeps grass greener
  - ✓ Repeat once a year to reduce the need for fertilizer
- Add it to your soil:
  - ✓ About 1 month before planting, apply 1-3 inches and work it into the top 3-4 inches of soil to help plants and flowers thrive
- Add it to your potting soil:
  - ✓ Mix 1 part compost with 2 parts potting soil

We want everyone to compost so compost bins are available dirt cheap at the Edmund Landfill in Lexington, South Carolina. Stop by Monday through Saturday between 7:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Pay with cash, check or a credit card at the scale and take your bin home that day!

Check out our website for more information on Solid Waste, Compost and Recycling!



<https://lex-co.sc.gov/dept-swm>

