

## Compost Units Series

# Easy Compost

Suzanne Smith Hirrel  
Extension Specialist -  
Waste Management

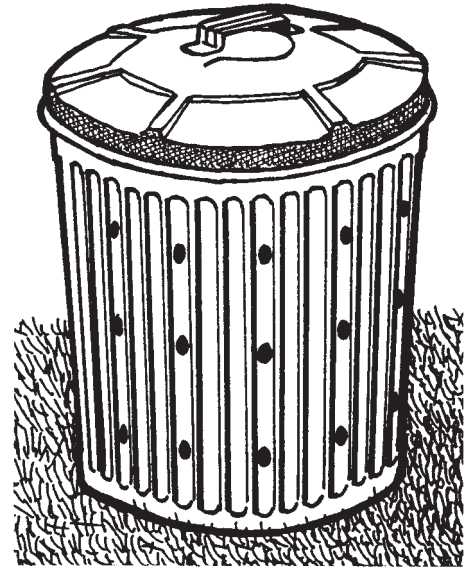
### Garbage Can Composter

A garbage can composter is inexpensive and easy to build. It can be used for food or garden wastes. The wastes do, however, need to be turned or mixed occasionally.

#### Building a Garbage Can Composter

##### Materials:

- **Garbage can with cover**
- **Coarse sawdust, straw, woodchips or dry chopped leaves**
- **Drill**
- **Pitch fork, shovel or compost turner**
- **Work gloves/eye protection**



Garbage Can Composter

#### Adding Wastes

Add fruit, vegetable and garden wastes. Make sure not to add too much of any one waste at a time. Wastes will decompose faster if cut into small pieces. Cover food waste with a 2- to 3-inch layer of sawdust, straw, woodchips or chopped leaves. Do not add meats or dairy products to the compost.

#### Maintain the Compost

Regularly mix or turn the compost and keep it covered. Turning adds air and mixes up the different wastes, preventing odor problems. "Too wet" compost can smell and may attract pests and complaints from neighbors. Sawdust, straw, woodchips or chopped leaves added to "too wet" compost dries it out and helps with odor problems.

1. Drill three rows of holes 4 to 6 inches apart all around the sides of the garbage can. Then drill several holes in the base of the garbage can. The holes allow air movement and the drainage of excess moisture.
2. Place 2 to 3 inches of dry sawdust, straw, woodchips or chopped leaves in the bottom of the can to absorb excess moisture and let the compost drain.

*Arkansas Is  
Our Campus*

Visit our web site at:  
[www.uaex.uada.edu](http://www.uaex.uada.edu)

## Compost Mound or Pile

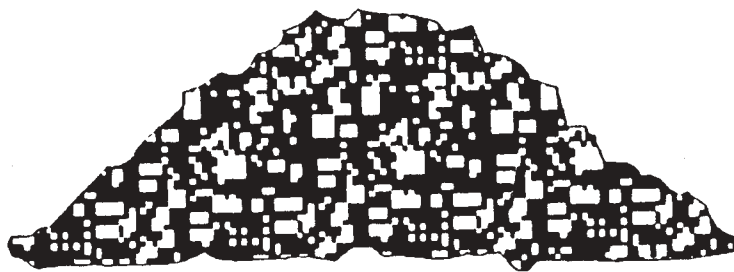
Yard wastes can be composted without a bin if you do not mind the appearance of an uncontained compost mound or pile. The only cost is time and labor.

### Materials

- Yard waste
- Rake, shovel or pitch fork

### Building a Compost Mound or Pile

Find a good location and pile yard waste in a pile about 3 feet x 3 feet x 3 feet. The pile can be larger but should not be smaller. If the pile is covered with a layer of soil, it will help keep the moisture needed for the decomposers to help make the compost.



### Maintaining a Compost Mound or Pile

A good idea is to have two piles. After the first pile is large enough, stop adding material and let it work. In the meantime, add wastes to the second pile.

Make sure the pile is moist, especially if not covered with soil.

Turning the piles speeds up the composting process. Compost should be ready in several months if the pile is turned occasionally or about a year if not turned.

Reprinted with permission from "Composting to Reduce the Waste Stream," published by NRAES (607) 255-7654. Artwork by Richard DeSpain, former architectural draftsman, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, Little Rock.

**SUZANNE SMITH HIRREL** is Extension specialist - waste management, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, Little Rock.

Pursuant to 7 CFR § 15.3, the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services (including employment) without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, sexual preference, pregnancy or any other legally protected status, and is an equal opportunity institution.