



A party planner's guide to **COMPOSTING**

A step by step guide of how to create your very own compost
and have fun while doing it!



Let the fun begin!



Join the compost conga line!

Composting reduces weeds; helps retain moisture in soil and reduces the need for fertilizers in your garden. And that's only the half of it!

By hosting a compost party at your house, you will reduce your general waste wheelie bin contents by approximately 50%!



Step 1 - Pick your compost style

To host a successful compost party, it's important to choose a 'style' that suits you. When planning your composting system, choose one that is convenient and suits your lifestyle.

- Kitchen bench – there are a range of urban living 'bucket' style compost systems you can keep right on your kitchen bench or under the sink!
- Compost bin – a more traditional option for residential areas, a range of compost bin styles can be purchased from your local hardware stores
- Compost heap – a great option for big backyards and rural areas, a compost heap is cheap and effective and produces compost on mass for your garden.

While you can compost successfully in a pile on the ground, a bin or contained heap will keep the process neater. A contained compost is easier to control temperature levels and unwanted guests (like vermin).

Consider chickens - Berrrkerrrk!

The ultimate (and quickest) composter of your kitchen scraps which also produces fertiliser for your yard; chickens!

Check the requirements for keeping chickens before purchasing any feathered friends.





Step 2 - Lock in the ideal backyard venue

When choosing the ideal location for your compost party, there are a number of things to consider. Ideal locations will be:

- Convenient - close to your house;
- Outdoors - plenty of sun; and
- Good drainage - no boggy shoes at your party!

Step 3 - Decorate

Deck your compost party out with the right decorations to set yourself up for success! Choosing the right decorations will help create the right atmosphere for your compost party.

Before your party starts, decorate your compost area or bin by:

- Laying a base of soil, sand or gravel for drainage;
- Lining the bottom and sides with chicken wire to help with rodent proofing; and
- Creating a rustic base layer of woodchips or mulched dry garden trimmings to assist with drainage.



Step 4 - Catering requirements

What you feed your guests can make or break a compost party! It is important to cater for dietary requirements as well as providing a range of popular food choices that will go down a treat with your guests.

Ingredients for compost

- Vegetable and food scraps;
- Leaves;
- Tea bags and coffee grounds;
- Vacuum cleaner dust;
- Dead flowers;
- Eggs shells;
- Grass and small garden cuttings;
- Shredded paper; and
- Used potting mix

Dietary requirements

- No meat;
- No dairy products;
- No diseased plants;
- No animal manures;
- No magazines;
- No large branches; and
- No chemicals

None for me, thanks!



Step 5 - Party time! Excellent!

Setting the mood at a party requires a good mix of music... compost also needs a good mix of ingredients on rotation to keep the party pumping. Diversity is key - too much of one thing at a compost party is not a good thing.

Composts have layers!

Build the compost using a layer system with layers approximately the length of your hand. Add one layer rich organic ingredients then one layer of dry grass/garden cuttings and repeat finishing on a dry layer.

Spin the mix DJ!

Mix and turn the compost approximately once a week to ten days.

You spin me right round right round like a record.





Step 6 - Keeping compost composure

If your party starts to stink... no need to worry, it is easy to regain your composure. Smells can develop if compost is not mixed up enough or if it is too wet. Keep calm and compost on!

Here is how to regain your compost composure and reduce smells quickly:

- More stirring and aeration;
- Some additional dry garden cuttings; or
- Add a ready-made product like ash, dolomite or garden lime.





Step 7 - How to handle gate crashers

Keep track of who is arriving at your compost party. There are certain guests that will behave appropriately and show good party etiquette. These guests are literally the life of the party and the ones you want to stick around.

The 'life of the party' guest list:

- Worms are hard core party animals and even take heavy metals out of the soil;
- Slugs and snails;
- Soldier Flies; and
- Little flies.

More guests may want 'in' once the word spreads of your pumping party. Keep an eye on your guest list and know your plan of attack to add security measures in case of gate crashers.

The gate crashers:

- Ants can lurk in dry patches of your compost. To bounce ants out of your compost party, take out those dry patches by making sure your mixing technique is reaching all of the nooks and crannies.
- Cockroaches may gate crash your compost if the organic items are taking too long to break down. This may be because the compost is not hot enough so raise the temperature or add a product to help the break down process.
- Rodents should not make it through the bouncer on the door (that handy chicken wire base) but if they do, it's usually due to attraction to smells associated with grains, meat and dairy products. These items are not on the menu for your compost party anyway. Also make sure the lid is secure if using a compost bin.





Step 8 - Stayin alive, stayin alive

Your guests can be real party animals so usually a compost party will take between three to six months. This can be sped up if all layers are added at once and left to cook – this can take up to 10 weeks. If you find your party is dragging out and is moving too slowly, there might not quite be the right mix.

Keeping the party alive over the course needs the right mix of:

- Air – to allow the microorganisms and bacteria that break down the organic matter to breathe;
- Diversity – variety is the spice of life so add a range of items from the ingredient list; and
- Moisture – if you can get little droplets of moisture when you squeeze a handful of your compost you are on the right track.

Your compost party has peaked once it looks like soil and smells earthy.



Step 9 - Closing time

Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end...

The beauty of a compost party is that the party is never really over! It's just the warm up for the main event; regenerating soil, plants and garden beds at your house.

So don't be sad that it's time to turn the lights on, tidy up and move your guests on to bigger and brighter futures, this is only the beginning.

Introducing your compost and guests to your garden to mingle and network in the big wide world will reduce weeds, help retain moisture in soil and reduce the need for fertilizers.

And that's only the half of it! By hosting your own compost party at your house, you will reduce your general waste wheelie bin contents by approximately 50%.





Step 10 - Recovery

All good parties have a recovery session to recount the fun times, and to plot and plan the next one.

What worked well? Does the venue need to be relocated to get more sun? Is the menu providing the right mix for your compost?

Once you have reminisced about your compost party, you can set up and start the party planning again. If you get really tricky, you can even have two parties at different stages going out at the same time!

Could there be others you know that want to jump in and join the compost conga line too? The more the merrier! Tell them how hosting a compost party is easy as!



Helpful resources

International Composting Awareness Week Australia (ICAW)

www.compostweek.com.au

Clean Up Australia

www.cleanup.org.au

Planet Ark

Rockhampton Regional Council, PO Box 1860, Rockhampton Q 4700
P: 07 4932 9000 or 1300 22 55 77 | F: 07 4936 8862 or 1300 22 55 79
E: enquiries@rrc.qld.gov.au | W: www.rockhamptonregion.qld.gov.au


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