# WASTE FACTSHEET

# COMPOSTING

Composting is a great way to recycle food scraps at home. The system is easy to maintain and will result in nutrient-rich fertiliser for the garden.

#### WHY RECYCLE ORGANICS?

When organic material is compacted and buried in landfill, it breaks down anaerobically (without oxygen) and in doing so, produces large quantities of methane, a greenhouse gas 24 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

By diverting food and garden waste from landfill and turning it into compost, excessive methane production is avoided and what was once 'waste' becomes a valuable resource – free, organic fertiliser.

#### WHAT IS COMPOSTING?

Composting: turning waste into a resource by providing the right conditions to encourage the decomposition of organic material e.g. heat, moisture and oxygen at a minimum.

#### HOW DOES COMPOSTING BENEFIT YOU?



Fertiliser produced in a compost can:

- Improve soil structure and water retention
- Encourage microorganisms into your garden
- Produce healthier and more resilient plants
- It's free and completely organic!

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### SETTING UP A COMPOST BIN

If you wish to compost using a bin purchased from a hardware store, there are many types to choose from – free standing tumblers and static bins on the ground of all shapes and sizes. Alternatively, see what's lying around the house or visit the Burragan Recycle Shop to source some materials to upcycle. Set up your compost system using the below steps:

1. Choose a well-drained, sunny location.

2. Make a base layer of coarse material (8-12cm) – this will assist air flow throughout the heap.

3. Add a thin layer (1-2cm) of rich soil/finished compost (it will be full of micro-organisms that will speed up the process).

4. Add 'greens' – nitrogen-rich materials e.g. fruit/ veg/ fresh grass clippings.

5. Add 'browns' – carbon-based materials e.g. dry leaves and newspaper.

6. Layer the contents – one layer of brown material, then one layer of green material.

7. Add water and secure the lid – your compost should be as moist as a wrung-out sponge, and put on the lid.





# MAINTAINING A COMPOST

There are four main elements to maintaining a compost bin - the ADAM principle.

### ALIVENESS

- Billions of microorganisms and small invertebrates work together to break down organic waste
- The heat produced from respiring bacteria, fungi, worms and other organisms is essential for decomposition
- Place your compost bin on natural ground where possible to encourage these critters into your compost

# **DIVERSITY / DIET**

- Give your compost a diversity (variety) of food!
- 'Greens' are the fresh, wet scraps (nitrogen-rich)
- 'Browns' are the dry materials (carbon-based)
- To get the perfect ratio, add twice as many 'browns' as 'greens' in multiple layers (like a lasagne!). Always finish with a brown layer on top to minimise fruit flies

# What can I feed my compost?

- All fruit and vegetables (including onions and citrus)
- Leaves and grass clippings
  - Small branches
- Small bits of cotton
- Hair, nails and vacuum cleaner dust
- Weeds (seeds removed or heat treated first)
- Small amounts of cardboard/newspaper
- Manure (herbivore only)

# What should I avoid putting in?

- All meat and seafood
- Dairy products
- Large amounts of cardboard
- Tree stumps, large branches or treated timber

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# MOISTURE

- Your compost should be as moist as a wrung-out sponge
- Add water if too dry, but do not over water
- Reuse leftover water from cooking pasta, rice or potatoes, a vase, coffee/ teapot, or simply use water from the hose or watering can

# AERATION

- All the critters living in the compost need air!
- Turn the compost once a week to incorporate oxygen and avoid smells
- This can be done with a garden fork, compost turner, or PVC pipe core

#### TROUBLESHOOTING



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