

# TRASH TALK

## *Backyard Composting in Woodstock*

Trash Talk is a regular feature about waste management and recycling brought to you by the Public Works Department of the City of Woodstock.

For residents who are interested in finding an environmentally friendly way to manage or reduce waste, household composting may be the answer. Backyard composting is a natural and organic method that turns kitchen and yard waste into a soil-like product that can be used for gardening or landscaping.

It's important to understand a few things before considering your own backyard compost. The process of composting works with the help of microorganisms like bacteria and fungus, combined with air and moisture. The materials you dispose of need to provide adequate sources of carbon and nitrogen, since the microorganisms require these elements for growth and cell division.

For beginner backyard composters, a simple recipe to follow is equal amounts of "greens" and "browns". Green materials, such as fresh grass clippings, manure, garden plants, and kitchen scraps, contain large amounts of nitrogen. Brown materials, such as dried leaves and plants, branches, and woody materials, have high carbon content. For best results, chop or grind coarse materials into small pieces before adding them to the compost pile, which will

speed decomposition. Refer to the chart for more information on what can and cannot be composted.

Another important consideration is where to position your backyard compost. Pick a sheltered spot that is protected from the wind, but avoid areas next to trees and shrubs that can push their roots up into the pile. Make sure the compost gets as much sun as possible, which will help it retain heat. Also, give some thought to appearance in choosing a location – you don't want a pile of waste overshadowing a beautiful garden!

Finished compost is dark and crumbly and has an "earthy" smell. The pile will have cooled off and reduced to approximately one-third to one-half of its original size. Compost can be used in the topsoil of garden beds, spread under trees and bushes as mulch or used to make up a potting mix for houseplants or seedling trays.

Using a container for your backyard compost is not essential, but can help keep your pile neat and protect it from weather and pests. The City of Woodstock offers backyard composts for \$20 and has pre-made compost available for free at 944 James Street. They will also be organizing a seminar this spring to help residents learn more about composting. Stay tuned for more information!

Materials to INCLUDE ✓		Materials to AVOID ✗
✓ Greens	✓ Fruit scraps	✗ Meat, fish and bones
✓ Chopped Leaves	✓ Vegetable trimmings	✗ Plastics
✓ Dry grass (not wet)	✓ Egg shells (crushed)	✗ Metals
✓ Plants & weeds (without ripe seeds)	✓ Tea bags	✗ Fats and oils
✓ Old potting soil	✓ Coffee grounds with filters	✗ Dairy products
✓ Soft plant stems	✓ Shredded paper	✗ Pet waste
		✗ Cheese, meat or other sauces