

What to Place in Your Backyard Bin or Pile

On November 15, 2012, nationally observed as America Recycles Day, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced that food is now the single largest type of waste going to America's municipal landfills and incinerators. More than 33 million tons of food is wasted each year. When food is discarded in landfills, it produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. Americans throw away up to 40 percent of their food, an average of 20 pounds per person a month. Much of this wasted food is actually surplus, wholesome and edible food that could have helped those in need. Food waste makes up about 12% of what is thrown away.



Composting is nature's way of recycling. Composting converts organic materials, including food scraps (like fruits and vegetables) and yard waste trimmings (like leaves, grass and small tree branches) into a dark, earthy-smelling soil conditioner, thereby preserving valuable nutrient-rich organic resources. Additionally, composting can save money by lowering disposal costs and replacing store-bought fertilizers. Compost also saves water by helping the soil hold moisture, reducing water runoff. Composting can make a significant contribution to achieving waste reduction goals, especially if organic waste comprises a large proportion of your waste stream.

If you are interested in developing an onsite composting bin, first check with your local community or county waste and recycling coordinator to identify any restrictions on outdoor composting. A properly constructed compost pile is needed to minimize nuisances (such as odors) and achieve a quality finished compost.

Composting is easy with some basic guidelines. To learn more about backyard composting and tips for success, watch SWANCC's video at swancc.org.

Acceptable Materials

Greens: Nitrogen-Rich Materials

- Grass Clippings
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Bread and Grains
- Coffee Grounds and Filters
- Paper Tea Bags (no staple) or Loose Leaves
- Chicken, Rabbit, Cow or Horse Manure
- Hair and Fur

Browns: Carbon-Rich Materials

- Leaves, Twigs and Small branches
- Shredded Paper and Cardboard Rolls
- Sawdust
- Hay and Straw
- Wood Chips
- Egg Shells
- Dried-out Flowers or Plants
- Nut Shells
- Ashes (wood burning fireplaces)
- Dryer and Vacuum Cleaner Lint
- Wool or Cotton Textiles

Unacceptable Materials

Do Not Add: Oils, Fats, Meats, Bones or Non-Biodegradable Materials

- Meat, Poultry or Fish Products and Bones
- Dairy Products
- Fats, Grease or Oils
- Pet Waste
- Soiled Diapers
- Plastic, Metal or Glass
- Charcoal Ash
- Large Wood Material
- Fire-starter Logs
- Treated or Painted Wood
- Waxed or Glossy Paper
- Synthetic Fibers
- Weeds, Diseased or Invasive Plants
- Black Walnut Tree Leaves or Twigs
- Yard Trimmings Treated with Chemical Pesticides
- Anything Not Biodegradable

Guidelines sourced from epa.gov/compost

Visit swancc.org for additional information.



Composting Resources

University of Illinois Extension

University of Illinois Extension is the outreach effort of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, offering educational programs to residents of all of Illinois' 102 counties – and far beyond. Through learning partnerships that put knowledge to work, U of I Extension's programs are aimed at making life better, healthier, safer and more profitable for individuals and their communities.

web.extension.illinois.edu/state/hort.html

Cornell Cooperative Extension

The Cornell Cooperative Extension puts research into practice by providing high value educational programs and university-backed resources that help solve real-life problems, transforming and improving New York families, farms, businesses and communities.

cce.cornell.edu

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/rrr/composting/index.htm

Compost Guide

compostguide.com

Earth911

earth911.com

Home Composting Made Easy

Step by step instructions, products and resources for backyard composting

homecompostingmadeeasy.com

How to Compost

howtocompost.org

Let It Rot: The Gardener's Guide to Composting by Stu Campbell

storey.com

Master Composter

mastercomposter.com

MasterGardening

mastergardening.com

Worms Eat My Garbage by Mary Applehoff

Flowerfield Enterprises, LLC

(269) 327-0108

wormwoman.com

Workshops and Classes

Angelic Organics Learning Center

Caledonia and Chicago

(815) 389-8455 or (773) 288-5462

learngrowconnect.org

Chicago Botanic Garden

Glencoe

Have a composting question?

Call weekdays (847) 818-2901

or (847) 298-3502

chicago-botanic.org

Growing Power Urban Farm

Milwaukee, WI

(414) 527-1546 or (773) 486-6005

growingpower.org

Smart Farm

Barrington

smartfarms.org

The Talking Farm

Skokie

thetalkingfarm.org

Compost Related Products

Abundant Earth

Can O'Worms worm bin

abundantearth.com

Compost Bins

hayneedle.com

Compost Mania

compostmania.com

Visit swancc.org for additional information.



Composting Ordinance by Community

Backyard composting may be regulated by your community. It is important to follow the requirements in your relative code.

Arlington Heights

All compost shall be maintained using approved composting procedures for gardening and landscaping purposes. The Arlington Heights Park District is exempt from these requirements.

- All compost shall be located in a compost container as permitted in this Section, unless the sheet composting method is being utilized.
- No more than three compost containers shall be allowed on properties of ½ acre or less.
- Compost containers shall be located only in the side yard or rear yard. For properties of ½ acre or less, such containers must be placed a minimum of five feet from the property line or 25 feet from neighboring dwellings. For properties in excess of ½ acre, such containers must be located a minimum of 25 feet from neighboring dwellings. Where a side lot line is adjacent to a street, any compost container must adhere to the setback requirement for the principal structure.
- Items such as, but not limited to, the following organic materials are allowed in the compost pile: soil, grass clippings, waste sod, wood chips, shredded paper, egg shells, coffee grounds, straw, leaves, cooked and uncooked fruits and vegetables. Small amounts of activators may be added to facilitate the process.
- Compost shall not contain household garbage, meat or any meat product, fatty food, bones, animal feces, diseased plants, treated wood, manure, or non-plant materials.
- Compost shall be maintained to prevent the harboring and breeding of animals and offensive odors by frequent turning of the compost material to permit aeration.
- Newer composting techniques or devices may be permitted if they are reviewed and approved by the Director of Building and Health Services, with the advice of the Environmental Commission.

vah.com/assets/1/village_code/CHAPTER_19_02-12_Revision.pdf

Barrington

Compost piles/structures are allowable in the rear yard provided they are not within 10 feet of any property line.

Buffalo Grove

No specific regulations. Follow International Property Maintenance Code.

Elk Grove Village

Compostable materials such as grass, trimmings, wood waste, leaves, weeds and other garden refuse may be placed in a compost pile, provided it is placed in such a way so the material will not be windblown. The depositing of garbage, pet waste, meat scraps or other materials that may attract animals or vermin to the compost

pile, or which may produce an obnoxious odor, shall be prohibited.

Compost piles shall only be permitted in rear yards, except that portion of the rear yard wherein a drainage easement exists, and in no case shall a compost pile be located in any side yard. Compost piles shall be no more than five feet (5') in height, and shall not have a maximum ground or base area of more than one hundred (100) square feet. (Ord. 2121, 8-14-1990)

sterlingcodifiers.com/codebook/index.php?book_id=636

Evanston

Detached accessory buildings, structures and uses: Accessory buildings, structures or uses shall be permitted as provided in Table 4-A of this Section and detached accessory buildings, structures, or uses in a residential district shall:

- Cover no more than forty (40) percent of a rear yard when located in a rear yard. However, in no case shall the maximum lot coverage requirement for the zoning district be exceeded.
- Not be located in a side yard abutting a street or interior side yard between the principal structure and the side lot line.
- Not be located between the building line and the principal structure (except as permitted in front yards). Compost piles are permitted in rear yards in both residential and nonresidential districts.

library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=14913&stateId=13&stateName=Illinois

Glencoe

No specific regulations. Follow International Property Maintenance Code.

Glenview

No specific regulations. Follow International Property Maintenance Code.

Hoffman Estates

- Compost piles or bins may be located only in side or rear yards.
- Compost piles or bins cannot be placed or constructed in such a way so as to allow materials to be windblown.
- Compost piles or bins cannot emit odorous matter in such quantities as to be readily detectable at any point along lot lines, or so as to produce a public nuisance or hazard beyond lot lines.
- A large amount of grass clippings or branches next to a tree is not compost or mulch. There are several ways to construct compost piles and many types of composting bins are available at retail establishments. Piles should be placed on level ground in a sheltered, well-drained area, out of constant direct sunlight. However, they should not be placed in constantly shaded areas, such as under trees. Be considerate of your neighbors and choose a spot out of direct view.

hoffmanestates.org/index.aspx?page=172&title=Garbage+&+Recycling&top=1&title=Garbage+&+Recycling

Inverness

9-1-4: LAND POLLUTION, REFUSE DISPOSAL AND COMPOSTING: C. Compost Piles: 1. Definitions: For the purposes of this subsection, the following definitions shall apply:

COMPOST PILE: The location on the property where composting occurs in a heap, bin or container, provided, however, a compost pile of less than two (2) cubic yards in volume shall not be subject to the regulations and requirements of this subsection. A manure pile shall also be construed to be a compost pile.

COMPOSTING: The process of turning organic waste materials into humus. Temperature, moisture, ventilation and quantity of organic materials are factors necessary to the process. Domestic sewage or septage shall not be used in the process of composting.

HUMUS: The finished product of composting to be used for enhancing or renovating the soil on the property on which it was produced.

2. Composting Conditions: It shall be unlawful to maintain a compost pile which:

- Emits a putrid or rancid odor; or
- Attracts or harbors flies, rats or vectors; or
- Consists of domestic sewage or septage, animal carcasses, cooking greases or petroleum products; or
- Is located within one hundred feet (100') of any residence or residential structure or within fifty feet (50') of any public or private right of way, whichever is more restrictive; or
- Is located within one hundred feet (100') of a watercourse, drainageway, flood plain, lake or pond; this provision shall not authorize a compost pile to leach or drain in the direction of said surface waters; or
- Exceeds twenty four (24) square yards in ground area or twenty four (24) cubic yards in volume. (Ord. 91-427, 10-8-1991)

sterlingcodifiers.com/codebook/index.php?book_id=671

Kenilworth

No specific regulations. Follow International Property Maintenance Code.

Lincolnwood

It shall be unlawful for any person to store any garbage, rubbish, junk or combustible refuse, except for the express purpose of having it collected by a duly authorized collector within a period not to exceed seven days. It shall be unlawful to place or permit to remain anywhere in the Village any building material, garbage or other material subject to decay, other than leaves or grass, or rubbish and other materials which can be blown away by the wind, except in a tightly covered, waterproof container or in a properly designed and used composting container or enclosure

ecode360.com/15321885#15321885

Morton Grove

Alternative Disposal Of Lawn/Landscape Waste: In order to minimize the volume of landscape waste, residents are permitted to use alternative methods of disposing of landscape waste providing that alternative disposal is done as stipulated in this subsection.

- Residents are encouraged to use mulching mowers and side discharge mowers to minimize the volume of grass clippings to be collected and processed under the village landscape

waste collection program.

- Back yard composting bins are also allowable for landscape waste disposal provided the composting bins are constructed under the following guidelines:
 - a. a. Composting bins for the purposes of this chapter are defined as wire, wood or concrete block enclosures no larger than four feet (4') in diameter, and four feet (4') in height providing sufficient surface area for the controlled decomposition of landscape waste and other suitable organic material by aerobic bacteria.
 - b. b. Compost bins in residential neighborhoods shall be located only on private property in rear yards behind the rear building line and shall be located no closer than twenty five feet (25') to any other residential structure and at least three feet (3') from any side or rear lot line.
 - c. c. No person shall store or dispose of garbage in any residential compost bin in such a manner where odor is noticeable off site.
- Under certain controlled conditions persons are also allowed to place accumulated grass clippings under shrubs or in gardens as a mulching material provided the depositor has the permission of the owner of property where landscape material are to be placed if other than the depositor's own property. Grass used for mulching purposes shall be placed so as not to accumulate greater than two inches (2") in thickness and shall be maintained so as to avoid perceptible odor during the decomposition process. (Ord. 75-22, 10-13-1975; amd. Ord. 89-04, 2-13-1989; Ord. 89-08, 2-28-1989; Ord. 90-26, 3-26-1990; Ord. 92-15, 3-9-1992; Ord. 92-27, 5-11-1992; Ord. 96-16, 4-22-1996; Ord. 04-07, 2-23-2004) 7-6-10

sterlingcodifiers.com/codebook/index.php?book_id=511

Mount Prospect

Chapter 21. A new Section 302.11, Compost Piles, shall be inserted to be and read as follows: 302.11 Compost Piles. Compost Piles shall not exceed a maximum size of four (4) feet tall by four (4) feet wide by four (4) long. Compost piles shall be located behind the principal structure and are not permitted within any required front or side yards. Compost piles must be located a minimum of five (5) feet from a property line. Compost piles shall be regularly tended to ensure the materials are properly decomposing.

www2.mountprospect.org/WebLink8/DocView.aspx?id=298025&dbid=0

Niles

Composting and compost piles. Yard waste materials from the premises and adjoining sidewalk and parkway may be placed in a compost pile, provided that such materials are placed in such a way as not to allow them to be blown by winds. The depositing of garbage, animal waste, meat, meat scraps or products, dairy products, or other materials that may attract animals or vermin or which may provide an obnoxious odor shall be prohibited. A compost pile shall not be placed in any required front yard as defined by the village zoning ordinance, and shall be set back a minimum of three feet from the side yard lot line, set back a minimum of five feet from any rear lot line, and shall not be located less than 30 feet from any neighboring residential dwelling structure. In no event shall a compost pile be located in any side or rear yard drainage or utility easement. A compost pile shall be no more than 36 inches in height, and shall not exceed a maximum ground area of 10 square feet. Section 302.4.1

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Palatine

- Size of compost bins should be limited to 4x4x4
- A maximum of three (3) compost bins will be allowed on residential properties. Bins need to be made of commercial grade material, and barrel type contains are also acceptable.
- Yard waste should primarily make up compost piles.
- Items that are prohibited include: Oils, grease and lard Meat, bones and fish. Dairy products. Human or animal waste Inorganic materials.
- All compost also are required to be enclosed in a freestanding compost bin and be maintained to deter pests.

Compost piles and bins are allowed only in rear yards of residential properties, and must be set back from 5-feet from rear and side property lines, and 25 feet away from neighboring homes. Other locations may be reviewed by the Director of Community Services Department.

palatine.il.us/assets/1/code_of_ordinances/0-063-13_-_Sec__10-3_8_Compost_piles_and_location.pdf
(Ord. #0-63-13 - Sec. 10-3.8)

Park Ridge

No specific regulations. Follow International Property Maintenance Code.

Prospect Heights

Properly maintained compost piles may be utilized by single-family units for gardening and landscaping purposes. Such may be located in the side or backyard, the farthest distance possible on site from neighboring residential structures, patios and swimming pools, a minimum of five feet (5') from the property line. Compost piles shall not contain household garbage and must be regularly maintained by turning the composing material to permit aeration and/or by application of chemicals to induce rapid decomposition and prevent offensive odors. (Ord. 0-90-26, 7-2-1990)

sterlingcodifiers.com/IL/Prospect%20Heights/index.htm

Rolling Meadows

No specific regulations. Follow International Property Maintenance Code.

Skokie

- Compost piles shall not contain any materials other than landscape waste.
- Compost piles shall only be located in a rear yard, and shall be placed a minimum of 5 feet away from all property lines.
- Compost piles shall be in compliance with all regulations set forth by the Village Manager.

(Code 1979, § 14.13; Ord. No. 06-1-C-3408, § 2, 1-17-2006)

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South Barrington

No specific regulations. Follow International Property Maintenance Code. To satisfy the appropriate zoning setback requirements, residents are to follow their zoning codes relative to their home, typically 25-35 feet.

Wheeling

No specific regulations. Follow International Property Maintenance Code.

Wilmette

Compostable materials such as grass trimmings, wood waste, leaves, weeds, and other garden refuse may be placed in a compost pile, provided that it is enclosed in a fence, box or other barrier or container equal in height to the compost pile and in a manner to prevent materials from being wind-blown. Said fence or box shall not exceed 100 square feet in area and shall not exceed five feet in height. The container shall be set back from the lot line equal to the setback for accessory buildings and shall not be located in the front or side yard, or on a drainage or utility easement. The depositing of garbage, pet waste, meat scraps or other materials that may attract animals or vermin to the compost pile or which may produce an obnoxious odor shall be prohibited.

Any compost pile shall be maintained in accordance with Illinois Department of Energy and Natural Resources guide entitled, "A Homeowner's Guide to Recycling Yard Wastes," (reference numbers ILENR/RR-89/03 and XO4628-650M-3-90) as hereafter may be amended from time to time, which is incorporated herein by reference. In the event of a conflict between said guide and the provisions of this code, the code shall supersede the guide and shall govern the maintenance of compost piles to the extent of the conflict. Failure to maintain said compost pile as specified under Section 7-7.4, shall constitute a nuisance as specified under Chapter 14 of the Village Code.

[amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/Illinois/wilmette_il/chapter7refuserecyclingandyardwastedispo?f=templates\\$fn=document-frame.htm\\$g=%5Bbrank%3A%5Bsum%3A%5Bstem%3Acompost%5D%5D%5D\\$x=server\\$3.0#LPHit1](http://amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/Illinois/wilmette_il/chapter7refuserecyclingandyardwastedispo?f=templates$fn=document-frame.htm$g=%5Bbrank%3A%5Bsum%3A%5Bstem%3Acompost%5D%5D%5D$x=server$3.0#LPHit1)

Winnetka

No specific regulations. Follow International Property Maintenance Code

Examples of International Property Maintenance Code

- All accessory structures, including detached garages, fences and walls, shall be maintained structurally sound and in good repair.
- All exterior property and premises shall be maintained in a clean, safe and sanitary condition. The occupant shall keep that part of the exterior property which such occupant occupies or controls in a clean and sanitary condition.
- The exterior of a structure shall be maintained in good repair, structurally sound and sanitary so as not to pose a threat to the public health, safety or welfare.
- All structures and exterior property shall be kept free from rodent harborage and infestation. Where rodents are found, they shall be promptly exterminated by approved processes which will not be injurious to human health. After pest elimination, proper precautions shall be taken to eliminate rodent harborage and prevent reinfestation.
- All structures shall be kept free from insect and rodent infestation. All structures in which insects or rodents are found shall be promptly exterminated by approved processes that will not be injurious to human health. After pest elimination, proper precautions shall be taken to prevent reinfestation.

publiccodes.citation.com/icod/ipmc/2012/index.htm