



Celebrating 21 Years!

ask the landscape professional
Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

Welcome to my weekly series!

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest.

EMAIL OR MAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:
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Thank you Readers for Voting Sprigs & Twigs Best Landscape Company and Best Tree Service Every Year!

Give us a call if we can be of service!

Question this Week: Hello Linda- I'm feeling inspired this year and want to start composting. Can you tell me more about composting and what I can and can't use? – Willow

Linda's Answer:

Dear Willow - Composting is a wonderful way to dispose of every day food items, decaying house plants, and much more that can be used to nourish your garden.

You can start by finding an area outside that you want to use for your compost pile. Allow enough room so it can be about 3 feet by 3 feet and eventually reaching 3 feet high. There are all sorts of things on the market for compost bins made out of plastic or wood, but don't feel like you have to go that route. All you need is the space for a pile.

You'll need to start collecting the raw materials to add to the compost pile: think "browns" and "greens". "Browns" are items that are rich in carbon such as fall leaves, dead plants, paper towels, ripped up newspaper. "Greens" are items that are rich in nitrogen like grass clippings, vegetable and fruit kitchen waste (no meat products). Collect each group in a separate container before adding to the compost pile.



Start your compost pile with a layer of "Browns". Next add a layer of "Greens" followed by a thin layer of soil. As you build the compost pile try to add about three times the amount of "Browns" as you do "Greens".

Here are some things to avoid putting in your compost:

- 1) Animal feces from carnivores like dogs and cats
- 2) Bags & filters that contained your tea leaves and coffee grounds
- 3) Meat
- 4) Sticky labels from fruits and vegetables
- 5) Glossy/Coated paper
- 6) Saw dust from wood that might have been stained or painted
- 7) Large branches
- 8) Citrus peels and onions (will harm your worms)
- 9) Dairy products
- 10) Oils/Grease

Composting is an ongoing process, from one month to two years for full decomposition. You will want to turn your pile at least every month to allow the core to heat up and encourage faster decomposition. Adding water will help speed up the process as well. You will know your compost is ready when it has a sweet aromatic smell and appears dark brown or black. "Bad" odors are caused by an excess in moisture or lack of oxygen, which you can resolve by turning, poking, and mixing your pile more frequently.

Composting is a fun way to recycle and create great planting soil.

Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 21 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects.

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