

Compost Pile Troubleshooting

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Problem	Possible Causes	Solutions
Low temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not enough nitrogen - Too dry - Too wet - Pile too small to retain heat - Material too coarse or fine** - Pile has finished composting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mix in coffee grounds, food scraps, grass clippings, manure - Mix in water so pile is *50% moisture; cover to retain moisture - Mix in carbon (leaves, paper, woody materials); cover when raining - Add organics so pile is >3x3x3 feet - Mix in different-sized materials - It's time to use the compost!
Nothing decomposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Material too woody - Particle size too large - Pile too small - Not enough carbon - Not enough nitrogen - Not enough moisture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chip wood to <2 inches - Shred or chip to <2 inches - Build pile >3x3x3 feet - Add shredded leaves, paper - Add coffee grounds, food scraps, grass, manure - Mix in water to 50%
Flies around pile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food waste exposed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cover food waste with carbon
Pile too hot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Temperature above 160F, killing some beneficial microbes - Too much nitrogen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turn pile to cool it - Mix in carbonaceous material
Ammonia smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Too many grass clippings, or clumped together - Too much food scraps or manure - Not enough oxygen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tear apart clumps and mix thoroughly with carbon materials - Mix thoroughly with more carbon - Turn pile to add oxygen & add coarse material
Rotten or sulfurous odor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Too much food scraps or grass, or clumped together - Too wet - Particles too small 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tear apart clumps and mix thoroughly with carbon materials - Mix in carbon; cover when raining - Turn pile while adding carbon of different sizes and coarseness

*50% moisture level in pile: determine by grabbing a handful of material and squeezing it. When you open your hand, the material should stay clumped together but not have moisture dripping out. If the material crumbles, it's too dry.

**Too much coarse material can make pile dry; too much fine material will not allow oxygen to circulate in pile