

New Year's Resolutions in the Garden



Your 2013 garden will reward you with untold robust, healthy plant growth if one of your New Year's Resolutions is to start a compost pile. Compost, sometimes called "black gold," has long been considered a gardener's best friend. Once you see how easy it is to maintain a compost bin, this New Year's Resolution will go unbroken!

Compost improves the textures of any type of soil; sandy, clay loose or hard. Soils can both hold more water and drain more efficiently when compost is added. Compost, and the beneficial soil life it contains, like bacteria, fungi, and red worms, replenish the soil and make it a healthy, productive environment for plants to grow and thrive.

Easy as 1-2-3? Yes! The key to building a successful compost pile is a balanced amount of "greens" and "browns". Put simply, **Greens** (nitrogen) are your kitchen waste (no animal or oily food), green cuttings, coffee grounds, lawn clippings, horse, chicken, cow manure. **Browns** (carbon) are fallen leaves, dead branches (chopped), dried plant material, straw/hay, shredded newspaper, wood shavings. These ingredients mixed together plus a little water encourage the growth of micro-organisms that break down the materials into beautiful, sweet-smelling compost.

Building a compost pile: You can purchase a plastic bin from OSH or the Santa Clara Home Composting* or you can build a chicken wire closed cylinder in which to place your materials for composting. Just alternate 3" layers of Greens and Browns and add only enough water to moisten the materials similar to a wrung-out sponge, Some people turn their compost monthly with a pitch fork, but if you don't mind waiting longer for the finished product, you can just let it sit untouched and let nature take its natural course. Compost will happen!

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* <http://www.sccgov.org/sites/iwm/Home%20Composting/BuyCompostBins/Pages/Where-to-Purchase-a-Compost-Bin-and-Compost.aspx>