

Vermicomposting

Vermicomposting is a type of composting that uses worms (*Eisenia foetida* known as red worms or red wigglers) to break down organic matter quickly. Households without a lot of yard waste or with limited outdoor waste can use this method instead of the usual pile. Worms will eat a wide variety of organic materials such as paper, manure, fruit and vegetable waste, grains, coffee grounds, and yard wastes. Several places sell worms and pre-made worm bins which make this type of composting easier than most people think it is. A good place to learn more is from CalRecycle at <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/Organics/Worms/Default.htm>



More Resources

US EPA <http://www.epa.gov/compost/>

CalRecycle <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/homecompost/>

Riverside County Waste Management
<http://www.rivcowm.org/opencms/recycling/composting.html>

On this site information can be found about free composting workshops held throughout Riverside County

Sierra Club

<http://www.sierraclubgreenhome.com/go-green/composting/composting/>

Any Questions or Concerns?

**Contact the Tribal Environmental Office at 951.654.5544
Ext. 4129/4130**



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**P.O Box 487
San Jacinto, CA 92581**

**23906 Soboba Road
San Jacinto, CA 92583**

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Composting



**Soboba Tribal
Environmental Department
951.654.5544 ext. 4129/4130**

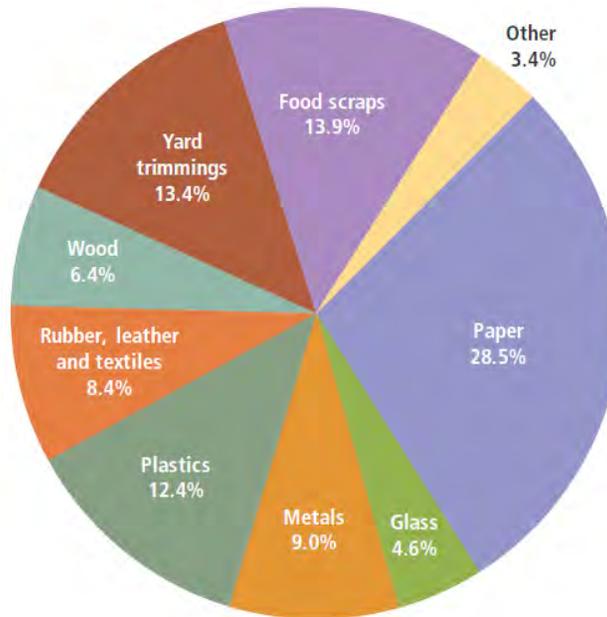
What is compost and why should I do it?

Compost is similar to dirt in that it is used to grow plants. One big difference of compost is that it is broken down organic matter (rather than broken down rocks) and has many nutrients that the average dirt does not provide. Mature compost is a stable material with a content called humus that is dark and has a soil-like, earthy smell. Mature compost includes the production of high temperatures to destroy pathogens and weed seeds that natural decomposition does not destroy.

There are two really good reasons to compost: reducing waste and creating your own soil enhancer. Yard trimmings and food waste make up 67million tons of the household waste that the US produced in 2010 (Figure 5). This takes up space in landfills that we need for things that can't be reused or recycled. Fertilizer can be expensive and compost can reduce or take the place of what you would buy.

- Compost enriched soil retains fertilizers better and less runs off to pollute water.
- Compost helps sandy soil retain water and nutrients.
- Compost loosens clay or silt soil so roots can spread, water drain & air penetrate.
- Compost enriched soil have lots of beneficial organisms that burrow through soil keeping it well aerated.
- Only a 5% increase in organic material quadruples soils water holding capacity.

Figure 5. Total MSW Generation (by material), 2010
250 Million Tons (before recycling)



How can I get started?

- Choose a location outside that is on bare ground, near a source of water, and not right next to any structure.
- Use either a pile or a bin. You can pile the material yourself or use a bin to help keep the area contained and larger animals out of it. Bins can be bought or made.
- There are 4 basic “ingredients” for a compost pile: air, water, nitrogen, and carbon. . Nitrogen sources are referred to as “greens” - fresh leaves, grass clippings, or fruit/vegetables. Carbon sources are “browns” - dead leaves, woodchips, or paper.
- Alternate greens and browns in your pile or bin so that you have an equal mix.

Continue starting...

- When finished, water well and then cover the pile with a tarp or close your bin.
- You can keep adding materials over time, but this will slow the process.
- Turn the pile weekly. You will notice that the pile is hot for a few days; then it will begin to cool. This means it is time to turn and mix the pile and add water if dry.
- Continue until the pile has a dark rich look like chocolate cake and the things you put in don't look like their original form. After it appears that the compost is done, water well, cover, and let it rest for 1-2 weeks to make sure it is completely done. If the compost is used too soon it could rob nutrients from the surrounding plants.
- After resting, it is ready to sift through a ½" strainer to remove the large chunks or simply rake through and pick out the big pieces that need more time to break down (use these in the next pile because they already have some bacteria and fungi on them). Larvae, insects, and grubs should also be removed before you add it to soil.

Start to finish, you can have completed compost in 6 weeks to 2 years. It all depends on the material, method, and the effort you put into it. The more actively you maintain the pile the faster you will receive your reward.

