

## Can I Compost In The Winter?

Yes. The compost process generates heat. The process is not destroyed by cold weather; it just slows down. Materials can continue to be added to your composter throughout the winter, even if the pile freezes. After spring thaw, the decomposition process will speed up again.

## Will Compost Attract Animals?

Materials such as meat, bones, eggs, cheese, fats and oils are not recommended for backyard composting because they attract animals.

To reduce the risk:

- Use a composter with a cover; secure with hinges or weigh down the lid.
- You can also utilize a base made of wire mesh to prevent animals from digging under the pile, while still allowing water to drain.
- When adding food waste, dig it in immediately and cover with soil.

## How Long Will It Take To Produce Compost?

Some composting methods will produce finished material in six months; others will take up to two years. If your kitchen and yard waste is in small pieces, the process will be faster. Similarly, frequent turning to aerate will speed up the process. Be patient, it will happen!

## How Do I know When My Compost Is Ready?

Your compost is ready when it is dark in colour, crumbles to the touch, has an earthy smell and no more heat is produced in the pile.

## What Can I Do With Finished Compost?

Once compost is finished, it can be mixed with your natural soil in the garden and added to potted plants as a soil enricher.

## Where Can I Buy A Composter?

Markham sells composters at a reduced cost. To obtain a composter, simply visit one of Markham's four recycling depots.

# Grasscycling

## What Is Grasscycling?

Grasscycling is the recycling of grass by leaving clippings on the lawn when mowing. Grass clippings will quickly break down, returning valuable nutrients to the soil. Grasscycling saves time, money, and protects the environment. Mowing time is reduced since the bagging and disposal of clippings is eliminated.

## Why Grasscycle?

Grass clippings are banned from Michigan landfills. Markham does not collect grass at all. Recycling grass clippings by leaving them on the lawn adds beneficial organic matter to the soil. Grass is free fertilizer and produces healthy, green lawns.

## Can I Put Grass Clippings In My Backyard Composter?

Yes. Backyard composting is an excellent way to dispose of any excess clippings you may collect. It also allows you to create your own fertilizer. Excess grass clippings should be mixed with other yard material such as leaves, hedge and tree trimmings and spent plants. Kitchen material such as fruit and vegetable peelings, egg shells, tea bags and coffee grounds can be added in alternating layers with your yard and garden waste.



## Grasscycling Tips

- Mow your lawn frequently to ensure that clippings are short and can fall easily to the soil surface.
- Set your mower blade high, 2 to 2.5 inches from the ground, and remove no more than 1/3 of the total grass length at each cutting.
- Keep your mower blades sharp and utilize a mulching blade or mulching mower for finer clippings.
- Avoid excess watering and fertilizing. This can actually be destructive to the lawn if it is done too often.
- In the fall, mulch your leaves into the lawn. They are an excellent source of nutrients.

*Remember...  
Markham does  
not collect  
grass clippings.  
Please  
grasscycle!*

## Questions?

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# Markham's Guide To Backyard Composting & Grasscycling



# Composting



## What Is Composting?

Composting breaks down household and garden material into basic nutrients that enhance the soil. It's an easy way to reduce household waste while improving the nutrient value of your garden and potting soil. Basically, composting requires mixing different types of organic materials with air and water. These materials then break down with the help of heat and micro-organisms.

## Why Should I Compost?

Compost can be used as a conditioner to enrich soil and increase its ability to hold moisture, nutrients and oxygen. The result is a cost free, chemical-free soil enricher that provides your plants with required nutrients such as nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus. This helps to promote healthy plant life.

Composting kitchen and yard materials can reduce waste by up to one-third. If everyone composted, it would dramatically reduce the amount of household garbage being exported to the United States.

## How Do I Get Started?

Composting is easy and anyone can do it. Once you have a composter you can begin. Just follow these simple steps:

### Step 1

Choose a sunny area with good drainage for your composter. It is also important that the location is accessible year round.

### Step 2

Turn the soil in the location where the composter is to be placed.

### Step 3

Once the base and unit are situated, place a layer of small branches in the bottom of your composter. This will let air enter the compost pile and allow for good drainage.

### Step 4

Place kitchen scraps (greens) and dried excess yard material (browns) in alternating six-inch layers.

### Step 5

Place a layer of finished compost or garden soil on top of the compost pile. This will introduce micro-organisms needed for decomposition and help to reduce odour.

### Step 6

Remember to turn the pile frequently to aerate your compost.

In summary, the composting process requires the following things:

- Organic material (such as fruit/vegetable peelings and leaves)
- Moisture
- Air
- Heat

You don't have to do much more than alternate layers of organic materials ("greens and browns"), keep the compost pile moist and turn it frequently.

## Composting Checklist

Check below for some of the most common things that can affect composting, and see how easy it is to get it right!

Problem	Cause	Solution
Sulphur Smell	Not enough air or too wet	Turn pile / add dry materials
Ammonia odour	Too many greens (nitrogen)	Add brown materials (carbon)
Animals & Flies	Attracted by odours of food	Dig food under immediately
Process too slow	Too much carbon	Add green materials
Centre of pile is dry	Not enough moisture	Moisten materials
Pile is damp	Too much nitrogen / poor drainage	Add brown materials

## Tips

- It is important to use some materials with a high carbon content such as dried leaves (browns), as well as some materials with a high nitrogen content such as kitchen scraps and grass clippings (greens).
- Keep the material as moist as a squeezed out sponge.
- A cover prevents compost from getting too soggy in the rain or snow and keeps small animals out.
- Occasional watering may be required if the pile becomes too dry.
- Turn the pile with a pitchfork or shovel to aerate. This should be done at least once a week to disperse the heat through the pile.
- When possible, chop larger materials into smaller pieces.
- In the summer, there is typically a shortage of dried brown materials to add to your compost. To remedy this, save some of your leaves in the fall to use at this time.

## Will It Smell?

Compost has a pleasant aroma. Foul odours only occur when there is a lack of oxygen, too much wet green material or too little brown material. Turning the pile can minimize odours.

## What Can I Backyard Compost?

- Vegetable and fruit peelings
- Dry leaves & grass clippings
- Coffee grounds & filters; tea bags/leaves
- Wood ashes
- Weeds, before they seed
- Spent plants and flowers
- Straw, hay, corn cobs
- Crushed egg shells
- Bread, pasta, rice (no oil/sauce)
- Woodchips and sawdust
- Hair and Dryer lint

## What Not To Backyard Compost

- Grass/tree clippings treated with chemicals
- Rhubarb leaves and other toxic plants
- Plants infected with disease
- Walnut shells, walnut leaves
- Charcoal/coal ashes
- Dog or cat droppings
- Litter box materials
- Meat and bones
- Plastics and metals
- Dairy products
- Fats and oils



Composters at reduced cost!  
For information call  
**905-415-7535**

