

Written by

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Warm weather is finally here to stay, and many Twin Cities residents are embarking on the annual spring-time ritual of yard clean-up and planting gardens. [RethinkRecycling.com](http://RethinkRecycling.com) encourages gardeners to compost fruit and vegetable scraps along with yard waste in back yard compost bins.

“More than 11 percent of our garbage is food waste that could be put to a more environmentally friendly use – creating compost,” said Angie Timmons, communications manager for the Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board. “Gardeners have long used compost to increase organic matter in the soil, improve soil physical properties and supply some of the essential nutrients for plant growth. Composting is an easy way for urban dwellers to turn waste into something that will help gardens flourish.”

[RethinkRecycling.com](http://RethinkRecycling.com) provides the following guidelines for successful composting:

- **Air Circulation:** Microbes need air to thrive and to process the materials in your compost pile. Keep air circulating by turning the pile with a shovel regularly.
- **Moisture:** Microbes need water. To test your pile, pick up a handful of the mixture—if water drips out, that’s too much water, if the material falls to pieces when you pick it up, it’s too dry. Ideally, the mixture will stay in a clump for a few seconds before breaking apart.
- **The Right Ingredients:** Keep the ratio of ingredients you add to three parts brown to one part green. “Browns” are carbon-rich materials, including dried grasses or leaves, straw, woodchips, twigs, sawdust or dead plants. “Greens” are nitrogen-rich materials like green leaves or grass, coffee grounds, tea bags, plant trimmings, and fruit and vegetable scraps.
- **The Right Location:** Compost bins should be partially shaded and at least two feet from your house, garage, or fences. A pile that is one cubic yard (3 ft. high, 3 ft. wide, 3 ft. long) is big enough to retain heat and moisture but small enough to be easily turned.

For more information on where to buy a bin, and how to properly and successfully maintain your compost pile visit [RethinkRecycling.com](http://RethinkRecycling.com) .