



Troubleshooting Guide: Backyard Composting

Use this guide to help you on your composting journey to success! Still have questions? Email us at lbrecycles@longbeach.gov or connect with us @LBRecycles on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Below are tips to help you address common concerns about backyard composting.

? My compost pile is not heating up.

Cause		Solution
<i>Pile is too small</i>	→	Add more materials to the pile or insulate sides by wrapping cardboard around the bin.
<i>Not enough moisture</i>	→	Add water and turn the pile.
<i>Not enough air</i>	→	Turn the pile to increase air flow.
<i>Lack of nitrogen (greens)</i>	→	Mix in nitrogen-rich material like grass clippings or fruit and vegetable scraps.
<i>Materials in the bin could be too large or dense</i>	→	Chop up any large fruit and vegetable scraps and/or remove any dense browns like palm fronds or tree branches thicker than half of an inch. Tip: breaking material into smaller pieces will also make it easier to turn your pile.

? My compost pile is dry.

Cause		Solution
<i>Not enough moisture</i>	→	Turn the pile and increase moisture by adding water, fresh greens, or frozen greens.
<i>Too much woody material (browns)</i>	→	Add fresh greens and turn the pile.

? My compost pile is too wet.

Cause		Solution
<i>Too much moisture</i>	→	Turn the pile and add dry porous material like straw, dry leaves, mulch, or other dry browns.

Backyard Compost Pile Troubleshooting continued



My compost pile is attracting pests like rodents, racoons, and squirrels.

Cause

Solution

Food scraps could contain meat, fish, fats, cooking oils, dairy, or bones



Remove materials that may be attracting pests (meat, fish, fats, cooked foods with cooking oils, and/or dairy, and turn the pile.

Food scraps could be exposed or not enough browns



Cover exposed food scraps with a layer of browns to prevent odors that attract pests, and make sure the lid is on and secure.



My compost bin smells bad.

Cause

Solution

Too much moisture



Turn the pile and add dry porous material like dry leaves, mulch, or straw.

Too much nitrogen (greens)



Add high-carbon materials such as sawdust or dry leaves.

Compacted materials could be preventing air flow



Turn the pile to increase air flow and add browns to maintain a 3:1 greens-to-browns ratio.



Spiders are building webs in my compost pile.

Spiders are not harmful to your compost, but if you don't want them in your bin, regular stirring, at least once per week, will encourage the spiders to build their homes somewhere else.

Common Misconceptions:

There is mold or fungus growing in my compost pile or my vermicompost bin

Backyard compost: Mold and fungus are important decomposers that help break down the material in your bin. While mold and fungus are not bad for your compost pile, you can reduce the presence of mold or fungus by reducing the moisture in your compost and stirring frequently.

Vermicompost: Most mold that forms on vegetables is OK, but mold that forms on fruit could be harmful to your worms. To prevent mold in your worm bin, prevent overfeeding and add dry bedding like shredded paper or sheets of newspaper on top to maintain a balanced level of moisture. Remove any mold and moldy food from the bin.

My compost pile is attracting insects

Most insects found in your bin are beneficial to your compost and are part of the natural ecosystem! This includes worms, spiders, millipedes, ants, beetles, earwigs, and more.

Have questions or need more information? Visit longbeach.gov/lbrecycles or call 562-570-2869



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To request this information in an alternative format or to request a reasonable accommodation, please contact Department of Public Works at lbrecycles@longbeach.gov or 562-570-2850. A minimum of three (3) business days is requested to ensure availability. Reasonable attempts will be made to accommodate requests made within less than three (3) business days.

