

# Get RainReady with COMPOST BINS



In RainReady<sup>SM</sup> communities, better water management means that homes, schools, and businesses are prepared for rain—whether too much or too little. RainReady programs keep residences secure and dry, services running, and rivers and lakes clean.



## WHY COMPOST AT HOME?

- Helps your garden and house plants grow by improving soil fertility.
- Saves you money by replacing store-bought soil conditioners.
- Saves water by helping the soil hold moisture and reduce runoff.
- Benefits the environment by recycling valuable organic resources, reducing air and water pollution from garbage.

## DID YOU KNOW?

IN A TYPICAL CHICAGO HOME,  
KITCHEN SCRAPS ACCOUNT FOR  
NEARLY 20% OF THE GARBAGE  
PRODUCED!

## COMPOST WORKS FOR YOU!

Composting helps the environment and it can help your garden, lawn and house plants too! When your compost looks like soil and smells sweet and earthy, it is ready to use. You can use it:

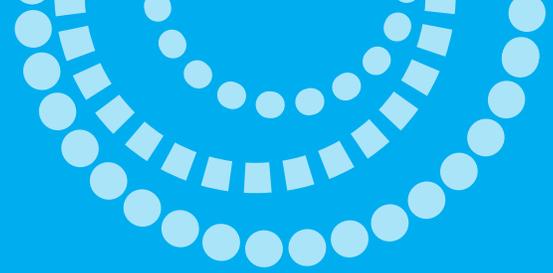
- In new garden beds: Mix a 4” to 8” layer of compost into newly reclaimed or poor soils.
- In existing beds: Mix a 1” to 3” layer of compost into annual garden beds at least once a year.
- On the lawn: Spread a thin layer of mulch evenly across lawn as needed, instead of fertilizer.
- As a mulch: Spread a 1” to 3” layer of coarse compost on soil as a mulch any time during the growing season to improve soil fertility and reduce watering needs. Do not pile mulch on the stems of plants or the trunk of trees.
- On house plants: Sprinkle a thin layer of sifted compost on top of the soil to provide nutrients.

## WE CAN HELP!

If you or your community are interested in getting RainReady, CNT staff members are available for presentations and for case-by-case technical assistance. Our presentations explain the benefits of rain readiness and outline their key elements, including needs assessments, financing, and supportive policies.

For more information visit [rainready.org](http://rainready.org)  
or contact [info@rainready.org](mailto:info@rainready.org).





## CONVENTIONAL LANDSCAPING

- Generates stormwater runoff and puts stress on our sewers while wasting treated water.
- Can be expensive to maintain and requires new planting annually.
- Sometimes includes exotic and invasive species.
- Can require the use of fertilizers and pesticides.
- Yearly planting, fertilizing and maintenance generates excess waste.
- Does not impact home energy efficiency.
- Often promotes materials shipped from far away at great cost.

## SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING

- Minimizes stormwater runoff and utilizes valuable rainwater for irrigation.
- Minimizes maintenance costs by utilizing perennials and long-term landscape planning.
- Designed with native species that have adapted to survive in our climate and do not require fertilizers or pesticides.
- Native plants maintain four-season appeal by attracting and sustaining our native birds and other wildlife year-round.
- Low-maintenance means low-waste. The waste generated is composted and reused throughout the landscape.
- Promotes home energy efficiency. Trees provide shade in summer and block winds in winter.
- Supports our local businesses by employing a greater number of small facilities, hand labor and ongoing maintenance.

## WHAT TO THROW IN YOUR COMPOST BIN?

Keep your compost bin from becoming a nuisance by limiting odor, litter, or dust and by only adding the “right” things to your compost bin.

### DO

- ✓ Fallen leaves
- ✓ Wood prunings, chopped
- ✓ Untreated wood sawdust
- ✓ Black + white newspaper
- ✓ Dried lawn clippings
- ✓ Fruit + vegetable scraps
- ✓ Young weeds
- ✓ Coffee grounds + filters
- ✓ Egg shells
- ✓ Citrus rinds
- ✓ Tea bags
- ✓ Fresh lawn clippings

### DON'T

- ✗ Meat, bones, or fish
- ✗ Dairy products or grease
- ✗ Grains, breads or beans
- ✗ Dog, cat or bird feces
- ✗ Plywood or treated wood sawdust
- ✗ Diseased plants
- ✗ Weeds that went to seed
- ✗ Invasive plants

## WHAT DO YOU NEED TO COMPOST IN YOUR BACKYARD?

**COMPOST BIN:** A compost bin that does not have any holes larger than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch, including a base for the ground — this will help keep pests out of your compost bin.

**“GREENS”:** food scraps, green grass clippings, young weeds

**“BROWNS”:** dried leaves, straw, newspaper

**PITCH FORK OR TURNING FORK**

**WATER SOURCE:** rain barrel, watering can, or hose to keep the compost pile as moist as wrung-out sponge



## FOLLOW THE BASIC COMPOST 1-2-3

### STEP 1

#### FEED

Feed yard trimmings to your bin as you generate them by chopping them first into pieces 6” or smaller. Food scraps and grass clippings need to be buried or mixed into the center of the pile (never “dump and run” or else you will have animals and flies attracted to the smells in your bin). Be sure to mix enough browns to evenly balance your greens.

### STEP 2

#### MAINTAIN

Maintain compost by turning it or mixing it each time you add material, or about once a week. As it gets full you only need to turn or mix the top layers. Keep it moist as a wrung out sponge.

### STEP 3

#### HARVEST

Harvest the rich, brown, finished compost after 4-12 months. It can be found at the bottom and center of the pile. Use the harvest door if your bin has one, or remove the top layers of the pile to access the bottom layers. If you need a fine textured compost, sift out coarse, unfinished materials and return these to the pile.

**1. Chop** materials if you want them to break down more quickly.



**2. Mix Browns & Greens** (dry, woody materials with moist, green materials).



**3. Maintain Air & Water Balance** by keeping compost as moist as a wrung-out sponge.



## UNDERSTANDING YOUR SITE

### LAYOUT

Take a good look at your site. Note the placement of existing plants and trees, paved areas, buildings and power lines. Take a few days to monitor which areas get full or partial sunlight and take note of low spots that tend to collect water during rain storms.

### SOIL

Determine your soil type before you purchase new plants or trees and check with your local garden center for species adapted to your soil type. If you are planning to grow vegetables, build a raised bed or have your soil tested to ensure it is safe for growing vegetables.

### SUN

Before you buy new plants or trees, be sure to note the sunny and shady areas of your yard. Each species has its own sunlight requirement and should be planted accordingly. Look for opportunities to use trees for shading a seating area or the windows of your home.

## SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING TIPS

- Use locally-sourced and recycled materials where possible.
- Avoid impermeable surfaces. Utilize permeable materials where possible.
- Use homemade compost instead of store-bought fertilizers.
- Practice Integrated Pest Management instead of applying pesticides.
- If you choose to keep a lawn, utilize natural lawn care practices.
- To maximize energy savings, strategically plant trees to serve as wind-blocks in the winter and shade your home in the summer.
- See [www.chicagohomecomposting.org](http://www.chicagohomecomposting.org) and [www.landscapeforlife.org](http://www.landscapeforlife.org) for more information.

ARE YOU RAINREADY? IS YOUR COMMUNITY RAINREADY?

LEARN MORE AT [WWW.RAINREADY.ORG](http://WWW.RAINREADY.ORG)

