

EASY COMPOSTING TECHNIQUES

People with allergies and respiratory ailments should consult a physician before composting.

TURN THIS



- grass clippings
- fallen leaves
- weeds
- sawdust
- trimmings
- garden debris

↑ INTO THIS



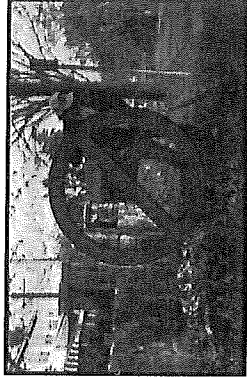
- A soil conditioner to:
- control weeds
 - prevent erosion
 - prevent plant disease
 - conserve water
 - beautify

JUST SAY MOW!



Cut no more than 1/3 of the grass blade.

Leave grass clippings on the lawn to decompose naturally.

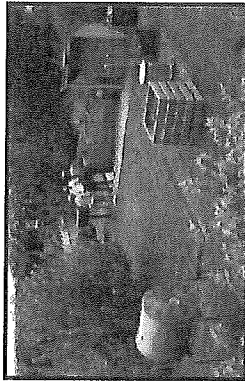


Don't rake.

Chop leaves with a mower and leave on the lawn.

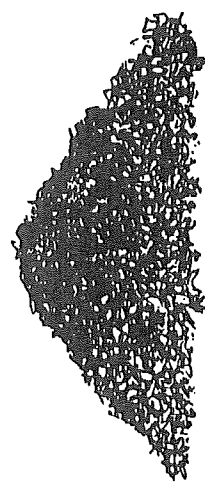
LESS Fertilizer
LESS Water
LESS Work
LESS Waste

OR START A COMPOST PILE



Choose the system that works for you.

Buy or build a compost bin or



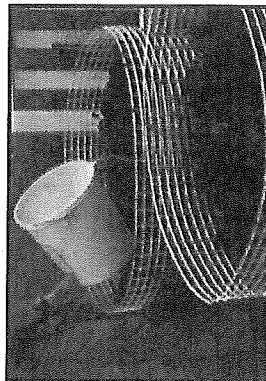
3 FEET

5 FEET

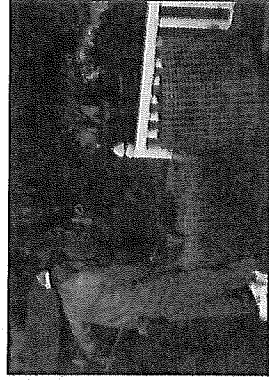
Make a pile approximately 3'x5'.
Make additional piles as needed.
Never add food waste.

Combine:

- 1/3 green waste
 - 2/3 brown waste
- add a shovelful of soil or finished compost



Moisten until as damp as a wrung out sponge.



Turn frequently for faster decomposition.



Use as:
mulch, potting soil
soil conditioner

*Chester County Solid Waste Authority
Lancaster Landfill
7224 Division Highway
Narvon, PA 17555
610-273-3771*

PLANS FOR CONSTRUCTING COMPOST BINS

WOODEN-PALLET HOLDING UNIT - YARD WASTE ONLY

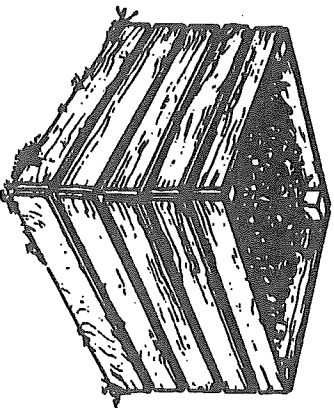
A holding unit can be built using pallets, or recycled plastic or lumber. Used pallets are often available from manufacturers and landfills.

Building A Holding Unit Using Wooden Pallets

1. Nail or wire four pallets together to make a four-sided bin at least 3 feet x 3 feet x 3 feet. The bin is then ready to use.
2. A fifth pallet can be used as a base, to allow more air to get into the pile and to increase the stability of the bin.

Building A Holding Unit Using Lumber

1. Saw the 8-foot lengths of 2 x 4 lumber into four pieces, each 4 feet long, to be used as corner posts.
2. Choose a 3-foot square site for your compost bin. Use the sledge hammer to pound the four posts into the ground 3 feet apart, at the corners of the square.
3. Saw each of the five 12-foot boards into four 3-foot pieces. Allowing five boards to a side and, starting at the bottom, nail the boards to the posts to make a four-sided container. Leave 2 inches between the boards to allow air to get into the pile.
4. If you wish to decrease your composting time, build a second holding unit so that the wastes in one can mature while you add wastes to the other.



WIRE-MESH HOLDING UNIT - YARD WASTE ONLY

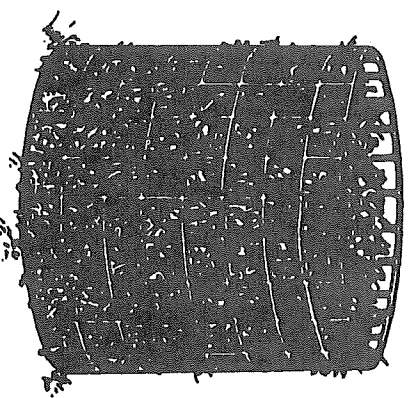
A wire-mesh holding unit is inexpensive and easy to build out of either galvanized chicken wire or hardware cloth. (Non-galvanized chicken wire can also be used, but will not last as long.) Posts provide more stability for a chicken wire bin, but make the bin difficult to move. A wire-mesh bin made without posts is easy to lift, and provides access to the compost that is already "done" at the bottom of the pile while the compost at the top of the pile is still decomposing.

Building A Wire-Mesh Holding Unit Using Chicken Wire

1. Fold back 3 to 4 inches of wire at each end of the cut piece to provide a strong, clean edge that will not poke or snag, and that will be easy to latch.
2. Stand the wire in a circle and set it in place for the compost pile.
3. Cut the heavy wire into lengths for ties. Attach the ends of the chicken wire together with the wire ties, using pliers.
4. Space wood or metal posts around the inside of the chicken-wire circle. Holding the posts tightly against the wire, pound them firmly into the ground to provide support.

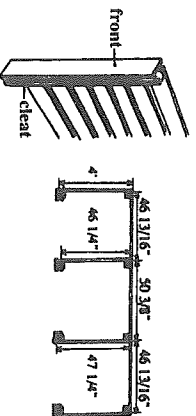
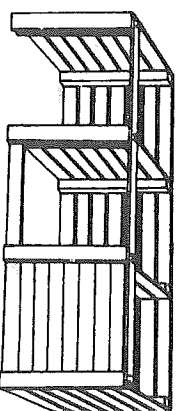
Building A Wire-Mesh Holding Unit Using Hardware Cloth

1. Trim the ends of the hardware cloth so that the wires are flush with a cross wire to prevent edges that could poke or scratch hands. Lightly file each wire along the cut edge to ensure safe handling when opening and closing the bin.
2. Bend the hardware cloth into a circle, and stand it in place for the compost pile.
3. Cut the heavy wire into lengths for ties. Attach the ends of the hardware cloth together with the wire ties, using pliers.



WOODEN THREE-BIN TURNING UNIT - YARD WASTE ONLY

This turning unit is a permanent, sturdy structure, but it may be difficult to space the posts to the exact dimensions illustrated. Before cutting the removable slats that slide into the grooves at the front of each bin, cut one slat and check for proper fit in each bin.



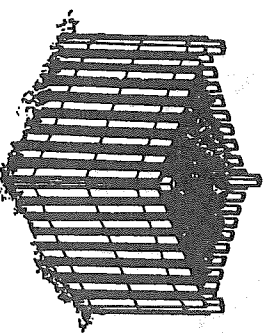
1. On level ground, set the eight posts as shown below using a post hole digger. (The posts are shown as darkened squares.) Imbed each post 2 feet into the ground. Be sure all posts are plumb (perpendicular to the ground). The top of each post should be at the same distance above the ground (48 inches).
2. Nail (or screw) on the back and side slats and dividers (pre-drill all holes to prevent splitting). Use adhesive on all joints. The bottom slats should be at ground level. Leave 1 1/2-inch (horizontal) spaces between slats. Note that the ends of the dividers should come out to 1 inch behind the front of the front posts, as shown in the illustration.
3. Install the fronts and cleats, as shown, for one of the center divider posts.
4. After the front slats have been sized and cut, slide them into place between the fronts and cleats as shown in the completed bin illustration.
5. (Optional) Nail the top rail to each front post, as shown in the completed bin illustration above. Do not use adhesive, and do not drive the nails in fully, as they will be removed to allow access to the slats. The top rail is suggested to prevent the front posts from moving laterally. Another option to discourage this is to use 4-inch x 4-inch x 7-foot posts and embed them one foot deeper.

SNOW-FENCE HOLDING UNIT - YARD WASTE ONLY

A snow-fence holding unit is simple to make. It works best with four posts pounded into the ground for support.

Building A Snow-Fence Holding Unit

1. Choose a 3-foot-square site for your holding unit, and pound the four wooden or metal posts into the ground 3 feet apart, at the corners of the square.
2. Cut the heavy wire into lengths for ties. Attach the snow-fence to the outside of the posts with the wire ties, using pliers.
3. Attach the ends of the snow fence together in the same way, forming a 3-foot-square enclosure.

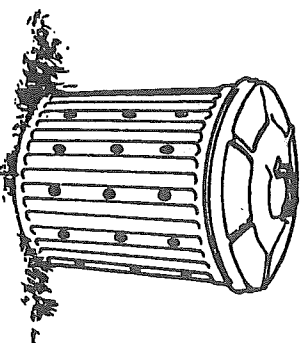


COVERED GARBAGE-CAN COMPOSTER SUITABLE FOR FOOD & YARD WASTE

A garbage-can composter is inexpensive, easy to build and approved for garden wastes.

Building A Garbage-Can Composter

1. Drill three rows of 1/4-holes 4 to 6 inches apart all around the sides of the garbage can. Then drill several holes in the base of the garbage can. The holes allow air movement and the drainage of excess moisture.
2. Place 2 to 3 inches of dry sawdust, straw, or wood chips in the bottom of the can to absorb excess moisture and let the compost drain.



Never put food waste in an "open" pile.

For more information call: 610-344-5937

This brochure was funded in part by an Act 101, 902 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

The key word is "LESS" -

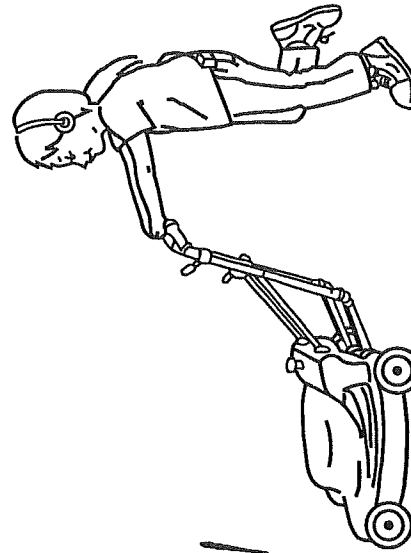
- LESS FERTILIZER
- LESS WATER
- LESS WORK
- LESS WASTE

Recycling clippings back into the lawn is less work than disposing of them as waste. No one has to handle the clippings--not you, your lawn care professional, or the waste management crew. By not trashing grass, you can reduce your mowing time by nearly 40 percent and spend less money on fertilizer and trash bags. And you'll be doing your part for the environment by reducing waste.

If you follow these "IT'S OKAY TO LET IT LAY" guidelines, not only will you have a healthy lawn, you'll never have to bag grass clippings again.

CHESTER COUNTY
RECYCLES

Chester County Solid Waste Authority
7224 Division Highway
Narvon, PA 17555



It's Okay to "Let It Lay"

It's Okay to "Let It Lay"

Did you know that a 1/2-acre lawn in Pennsylvania produces more than three tons--nearly 260 bags--of grass clippings each year? Think of all the time, money and effort it takes to bag all those clippings. Why go through all that hassle when it's not necessary?

You can have a healthy green lawn by leaving grass clippings where they fall.

It's simple. Grass clippings left on the lawn decompose and act as a natural organic fertilizer. This lets you reduce the amount of commercial fertilizer you need to apply. Your lawn will remain healthy and green because each time you mow, you will be returning valuable nutrients to the soil.



Mowing Techniques & Tips

Any mower can recycle grass clippings. Just remove the grass catcher. Ask your lawn mower dealer if you need a special safety plug or adaptor kit to convert your mower into a "recycling" mower. Installing a mulching blade also is helpful.

Never cut off more than 1/3 of the grass blade in one mowing. Keep grass mowed to 2" in early spring, gradually raise the height to 3-4" by summer, then gradually reduce to 2" by late fall.

Mow when the grass is dry.

Keep your mower blade sharp. Dull mowers tear the grass blade, injure the plant and cause a brownish cast to the turf.

If the grass gets too high, mow over the clippings a second time to further shred and scatter them.

To prevent excess growth between mowings, raise the mower height, mow, then gradually lower it over a span of several mowings. This will help prevent shock to the plants.

When it's time to replace your mower, consider a mulching, recycling, or nonpolluting reel mower. All of them do a good job of shredding and scattering grass clippings.

What About Thatch?

Thatch, a matted layer of dead roots and stems, usually is caused by too much water and fertilizer. Clippings don't produce thatch since they are 80 percent water and decompose quickly. A thatch layer of more than 1/2" should be removed.

Uses for Clippings

Compost. Fresh clippings should compose no more than 1/3 of the compost pile. They are an excellent source of nitrogen. Mix thoroughly with "brown" materials such as leaves or straw, and turn the pile regularly to aerate it and prevent odors.

Mulch. Pile about 1" of dried clippings on the soil to reduce weeds and moderate soil temperature. Mulching also controls erosion, run-off and evaporation. If using herbicides, wait at least two mowings after treating the lawn to use the clippings.

Soil Additive. Mixing fresh grass clippings into the garden improves soil texture, promotes moisture retention and adds nutrients and organic matter. About once a month, turn a 2" layer of grass into the soil to a depth of 6".

Fertilizer Application

Most grasses need modest amounts of nitrogen for controlled growth and good color. Too much fertilizer increases growth and results in more frequent mowing.

It is best to fertilize around Labor Day and again at the end of October. Fall fertilization promotes a vigorous root system and helps the plant survive winter, but does not lead to the excessive top growth of spring fertilization. Apply only 1/2 pound of nitrogen per 100 square feet of lawn. To calculate how many pounds of fertilizer should be applied per 1,000 square feet, divide 100 by twice the percentage of nitrogen (N) in the fertilizer.

This chart calculates some of the common fertilizer rates for you:

Fertilizer NPK Rating %	100 ÷ (2 x N%)	=	Lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft.
12-4-8	100/24	=	4.1
16-8-8	100/32	=	3.1
20-5-10	100/40	=	2.5
10-10-10	100/20	=	5.0

For slower, more uniform growth, use fertilizers that contain slow-release nitrogen such as methylene urea, ureaformaldehyde, sulfur-coated urea, or IBDU. The label may also read "water-insoluble nitrogen" or "slow release nitrogen."

Watering Practices

Pennsylvania has enough rain that turf grasses don't have to be watered to survive. Healthy lawns go brown during a drought, but quickly turn green when rainfall resumes.

If you choose to water, 1" of water will wet the soil to a depth of 4"-6". Place an empty can under the sprinkler to determine when an inch has been applied. If water runs off the lawn before reaching an inch, turn off the sprinkler and wait an hour before resuming.

Water deeply and infrequently to encourage deep root growth. Light, frequent watering encourages shallow roots, which increase the risk of disease and stress injury.

Water in the morning. Less water is lost through evaporation and transpiration.

Don't water at mid-day or in the evenings. A lawn that remains damp during the night is more prone to disease.

Alternative Landscapes

Consider turf grass alternatives. Increase shrub beds, grow a wildflower meadow, or plant ground covers such as English ivy, pachysandra and periwinkle. They look beautiful, don't need mowing and will help reduce maintenance and yard waste.