

# How to Use Your Earth Machine

The Earth Machine is available from Green Waste Recovery, 800-665-2209.

## ➤ Getting Started

### Assemble the bin

It's a little difficult to get the top half aligned with the bottom half, so after assembling, it's a good idea to fasten the bottom half to the top half by drilling sets of small holes on each half and wiring them together.

### Where should I put the bin?

Shade or partial shade is best. Easy access to kitchen and garden is good. Also, make sure you can reach the bin with the garden hose.

### What do I put in the bin?

**"Greens,"** fresh (and often green) plant materials such as grass, green weeds, green leaves. Kitchen scraps are also considered "greens."

**"Browns,"** dry and dead plant materials, such as dry leaves and dead plants. "Browns" also include weeds that have been allowed to dry out.

### Add the material in layers —

Start off with a woody layer of browns, so air can circulate up through the pile. Then alternate--browns, greens, browns, greens.

Example: dead plants, then kitchen scraps, then dry leaves, then grass.

### Add some soil —

Add a handful of soil to get microorganisms into bin.

### Add some water —

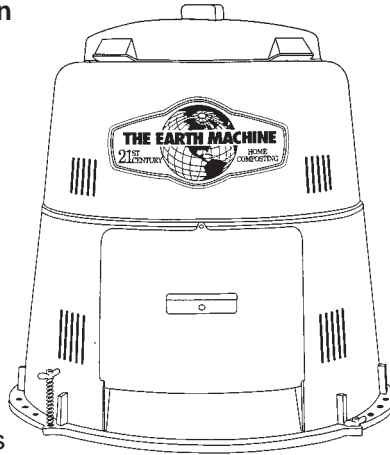
Keep material as moist as a wrung-out sponge.

### Which yard trimmings can be added?

- Yes: Dead plants, leaves, grass clippings, weeds.
- No: Bermuda grass, ivy, diseased plants, poison oak. Woody prunings over 1/4 inch diameter should be chopped or shredded. If you plan to use your finished compost in your flower or vegetable garden, avoid putting weed tops that have gone to seed in the bin.
- No: Pet manure, kitty litter.

### Which kitchen scraps can be added?

- Yes: Fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, egg shells.
- No: Meat, chicken, fish, bones, dairy products, oils, grease.



### After adding kitchen scraps

Add a layer of yard trimmings (use brown material if available) or a layer of soil to limit odors and flies.

## ➤ Two Ways to Compost

### Fast Composting

If you keep the material moist and turn and mix contents every two weeks, it will take about two months to produce compost. To turn the compost, lift up entire bin, set it down in new location, scoop contents back into bin. Or, poke or stir with shovel or pitch fork to let air into pile.

### Slow Composting

If you keep the material moist and poke or mix the compost with a shovel or pitchfork every month or two, it will take 8-12 months to make compost.

If you are a beginner at composting, don't be intimidated by the many tips and techniques for composting. Remember that composting is easy. With only a little attention to the basic needs for air, moisture and time, you will become a successful composter!

## ➤ Using Your Compost

### Removing finished compost

Finished compost is brown and crumbly and will be at the bottom of the bin. Open door and scoop out compost. Or, pick up bin and remove bottom layer of material.

### Using finished compost

Mix compost into soil in vegetable or flower garden or put a layer around shrubs or trees. Compost will provide nutrients and improve soil to help your plants grow.

**Learn more about composting and order publications online at**  
**[www.compostsantacruzcounty.org](http://www.compostsantacruzcounty.org)**

**Questions about Composting?**  
**Call the Rotline (831) 423-HEAP (4327)**



The Home Composting Program is sponsored by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors and produced by the Santa Cruz County Department of Public Works Recycling and Solid Waste Services

