

Your Guide to... Backyard Composting Worm Composting Xeriscaping Grasscycling

County of San Bernardino
Department of Public Works
Solid Waste Management Division
222 W. Hospitality Lane, 2nd Floor
San Bernardino, California 92415-0017

Phone: 1.800.722.8004
E-mail: SolidWaste@swm.sbcounty.gov
Web: www.sbcounty.gov/dpw/solidwaste

Printed on recycled paper
June 2009

County of San Bernardino
Department of Public Works
Solid Waste Management Division

The County of San Bernardino Solid Waste Management Division (SWMD) is a division of the Department of Public Works. SWMD is responsible for the operation and management of the County's solid waste disposal system which consists of six regional landfills, eight transfer stations and three community collection centers. In addition, the Division administers the County's Solid Waste Handling Franchise Agreements and Permit Program; Public Education and Educational Programs, Promotes Waste Diversion through a variety of media, press releases, grant solicitation and administration; Reviews Proposed Legislation and Regulations for impacts to the Division's operations and functions; Monitors compliance with AB939 including preparation of annual reports required by the California Integrated Waste Management Board.



For additional information on waste reduction, educational programs and workshops please visit our website at www.sbcounty.gov/dpw/solidwaste or call 1.800.722.8004.

BACKYARD COMPOSTING

Composting is nature's way of returning needed nutrients to the soil. Bacteria and other microorganisms, as well as a variety of insects, consume these materials producing an earthy

smelling rich compost. It also helps conserve natural resources and saves you money!

Greens are the nitrogen source of the

pile. Greens are sometimes referred to as the wet materials. Browns are the carbon source in your pile. Browns are sometimes called the dry materials.

Combine 50% of green material (lawn clippings, trimmings, livestock manure, fruit, vegetable scraps) and 50% brown material (wood chips, dried leaves, straw, sawdust, newspaper). Mix in water until the pile is as damp as a moist sponge. Turn (fluff up) your pile once a week. Add water if needed. Your pile should get warm. After several months (the actual time will vary based on many factors such as how often you turn the pile), when the material is a dark brown color and smells earthy like humus, your compost is ready for use.

Troubleshooting...

Symptom	Problem	Solution
Bad odor	Not enough air, or too much green	Mix the pile, or add in more brown
Compost to slowly	Not enough water	Moisten and mix the pile
Pile is damp, warms only in the center	Pile is too small	Collect more materials and mix it into the pile
Pile too damp, sweet smelling but no heat	Lack of green	Mix in more green (fresh grass clippings, yard trimmings)



VERMICOMPOSTING

Worm Composting is nature's way of recycling. It's a satisfying way to turn your fruits and vegetables into a dark crumbly, earthy-smelling, nutrient-rich humus.

Worms best for vermicomposting are "red worms" or "red wigglers". They are different from the earth-worms and night-crawlers who live underground and depend on cooler temperatures and an extensive tunneling system to survive. They will die in your worm bin.

Choose a bin out of wood, plastic or an old dresser drawer. Bin should be 10"-16" deep with a snug fitting lid and holes in the bottom or side. Pick a place where your worms will not freeze or overheat, i.e. pantry, kitchen corner or garage.

8"-10" of bedding will provide your worms with a damp place to live. Common bedding include strips of newspaper, shredded cardboard or peat moss (**do not use glossy paper or magazines**). Moisten the bedding until it's as wet as a wrung out sponge. This helps keep them cool and moist and gives them fiber to eat. Add a handful of soil. Worms needed depend on the amount of kitchen waste generated per day. One pound of worms will easily take care of each half-pound garbage. To add the worms to the bins simply scatter them over the top. They will work their way down into the bedding.

Start Slowly feeding your worms about a quart of fruit and vegetable trimmings. Be sure to bury your food scraps in the bedding to discourage molds and fruit flies. Leave them alone for a couple of weeks while they get used to their new home.

You can start harvesting in 2-3 months. Reach in and scoop out the brown crumbly compost, worms and all. You can also move the contents of your bin to one side, place fresh bedding and a handful of soil in the empty space and bury food there for a month or two. Harvest the side after the worms have migrated to the new food and bedding.



XERISCAPING

Xeriscaping, derived from the Greek word xeros meaning dry and scape, the last syllable of landscape, refers to a beautiful water-conserving landscape arranged to correspond with the existing environment.

Xeriscaping uses drought-tolerant plants that succeed in an environment carefully designed for maximum use of rainfall and minimum care. By limiting landscape water needs, Xeriscaping can significantly reduce water use and yard waste.

Xeriscapes generally require less fertilizer and pest control measures than traditional landscapes. Because pesticides and fertilizers can inadvertently harm beneficial organisms, as well as impact air and water quality, reducing their use is a good idea. And, of course, using less of these materials saves money.

Xeriscapes are not just cactus and rock gardens. They can be beautiful green landscapes full of lively plants, which are low maintenance and water efficient.

Green, California-style landscapes can be achieved while incorporating the seven basic principles of Xeriscaping:

- Planning and design
- Soil analysis and improvement
- Appropriate plant selection
- Practical turf areas
- Efficient irrigation
- Use of mulches
- Appropriate maintenance to reduce greenwater



GRASSCYCLING

Grasscycling is the natural recycling of grass by leaving clippings on the lawn when mowing. Grass clippings decompose quickly and release valuable nutrients back into the soil. Grasscycling is simple, easy, and works!

Grasscycling is one of the best ways to reduce yard waste! About one-third of organic home waste consists of lawn clippings.

Grasscycling can be practiced on any healthy lawn as long as proper turf management guidelines are followed. Unfortunately, many people treat their lawns like a "crop" they overwater and over fertilize their lawns to encourage maximum growth. The "crop" (grass clippings) is then bagged and transported to a landfill. Proper mowing, watering, and fertilizing results in more moderate turf growth yet still produces a healthy, green lawn.



Here are a few tips:

- Keep mower blades sharp. Sharp blades cut the clippings smaller and make a cleaner cut, which is better for the grass.
- Remove no more than 1/3 of the total length of grass (or one inch at most) in one mowing.
- Mow in a pattern that distributes the clippings evenly.
- Mow every five to seven days (or as needed) during spring and summer.
- Mow when grass is dry. Dry grass scatters more easily.
- If the lawn is too long or too wet, bag the clippings and use them as much, and till into the garden soil to decompose.