

AMGA Master Gardener FAQ

Home Composting: What has worked well over time?

Question:

What practical strategies have helped you successfully produce compost for garden use?

Answer:

After seven years of experimenting with home composting, I've found that a few consistent practices make a real difference:

- Keep the compost moist.
 - Compost breaks down best when it stays slightly damp. During dry periods, I add water using a bucket or hose to maintain moisture.
- Reduce the size of tough materials.
 - Hard or slow-to-decompose items, such as squash rinds, are chopped into small pieces before being added to the compost. I use a blender for these materials, which helps speed up decomposition.
- Supplement with municipal compost.
 - In my region, high-quality compost is available at the municipal compost centre. I bring my blue recycling box and hemp planter bags to collect it, then mix this compost with my home-produced compost. This combination provides both volume and consistency.

This approach has allowed me to build garden beds along my 90-foot rail fence, which I plan to plant with wildflowers grown from seed. Overall, it has been a low-cost but labour-intensive project, well suited to gardeners who prefer to invest time rather than money.

A “before” photo of the project is shown here. An updated photo will be shared once planting is complete in summer 2026.



— Gardener, Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu

Master Gardener Tip

Successful composting depends on three key factors: moisture, air, and surface area. Keep compost about as damp as a wrung-out sponge, chop materials into smaller pieces to increase surface area, and turn the pile occasionally to introduce oxygen and speed decomposition.

Further Information & References

For gardeners who would like to explore composting in more depth, the following resources offer clear, practical guidance:

Manitoba Master Gardener Association. *Help Your Garden Thrive Using Compost.* Published September 12, 2021, by Darlene Belton, Master Gardener. Manitoba Master Gardener Association. Accessed 2025. https://www.mgmanitoba.com/2021/09/12/help-your-garden-thrive-using-compost/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Halton Region Master Gardeners. *Composting with Redworms* (Howard Cole, October 4, 2017). Halton Region Master Gardeners. Accessed 2025. <https://haltonmastergardeners.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/composting-with-redworms-howard-cole-october-4th-2017.pdf>

City of Fredericton. *Home Composting.* City of Fredericton Resident Services. Accessed 2025. <https://www.fredericton.ca/resident-services/garbage-recycling-waste-reduction/home-composting-0>

Canadian Wildlife Federation. *Vermicomposting.* Canadian Wildlife Federation. Accessed 2025. <https://cwf-fcf.org/en/explore/gardening-for-wildlife/how/earth/compost-and-other-natural-fertilizers/vermicomposting.html>

Carolinian Canada. *Composting.* Carolinian Canada. Accessed 2025. <https://caroliniancanada.ca/mywild/article/composting-20200612>