



# COMPOSTING

Benton Clean Air Agency, 526 S. Clodfelter Road, Kennewick, WA 99336  
Phone: 509-783-1304 Website: [www.bentoncleanair.org](http://www.bentoncleanair.org)

## What does this mean?

Vegetative residue from yards, gardens, and other landscaping features can be turned into a useful organic soil amendment by natural microbial breakdown of a properly mixed, aerated, and moistened mixture. Certain types of kitchen wastes from food preparation can also be used in this process.

## WHY ALTERNATIVES

Residential and land clearing burning is not allowed within the Urban Growth Area (UGA) of cities or where there are reasonable alternatives. Except for residential burning, which is exempt from a permit, outside the UGA it is necessary to obtain a written permit from Benton Clean Air Agency for other types of burning. Vegetative residue cannot be hauled from an area where burning is prohibited to an area where burning is allowed.

This information is intended to briefly explain who, how, and why composting could be used as an alternative to burning. Use of alternatives to burning is encouraged even in areas where burning is not prohibited.

## WHO COULD USE COMPOSTING?

- Individuals at private residences.
- Local neighborhoods with several residences.
- Regional community-based composting by cities, counties, or private enterprise.

## HOW DO I COMPOST?

- Mix approximately equal quantities of “green” and “brown” vegetative materials into an open pile or enclosed in a bin. Moisten as you mix to about what a wet squeezed sponge contains.
- Green materials include grass clippings, weeds, residue from flowerbed trimmings. Brown materials include tree leaves, shrub trimmings, or any other woody material. Larger branches or limbs should be chipped.
- If you are short of green or brown materials ask neighbors if they have extra grass clippings, leaves, etc. as appropriate. Bales of straw purchased at agricultural supply stores or rural residents can also be a good source of brown material.
- Maintain good aeration by frequent turning of the pile. Turning the pile at least weekly will speed the composting process. Less frequent turning will be easier but it will prolong the process.
- Also maintain a moist but not wet mixture. This can be done at the time of turning and is aided if the pile receives water when irrigating especially if turning is infrequent.



## WHY SHOULD I COMPOST?

- Uses materials that would otherwise be discarded or burned.

- Produces a useful soil amendment that makes a more healthy soil, which will take in, store, and supply water and plant nutrients more efficiently and inexpensively.
- Provides satisfying activity and exercise.

## **DOWNSIDE AND PROBLEMS**

- Requires considerable effort and takes space.
- Can produce unpleasant odors especially if certain materials are included in the mix.
- May conflict with other uses of the materials. For instance, use of a mulching mower recycles grass clippings directly into the lawn that uses probably the best source of green material for a composting pile.
- Accumulates if supply of compost exceeds places where it can be used.

## **MORE INFORMATION**

### **Weed Control**

- Yellow Pages: *Weed Control, Lawn & Grounds Maintenance*
- WA State Weed Association 509-547-5538
- Benton Co. Noxious Weed Control 509-786-6988
- Franklin Co. Noxious Weed Control 509-545-3847

### **Landscaping**

- Yellow Pages: *Tree Service, Lawn & Grounds Maintenance*
- WA State University Master Gardeners 509-735-3551 or 509-786-2226 or [www.gardening.wsu.edu/eastside](http://www.gardening.wsu.edu/eastside)
- Internet
  - Search Term: *xeriscape, low water use landscaping*

### **Chipping and Mulching**

- Yellow Pages: *Tree Service, Lawn & Grounds Maintenance, Landscape Equipment & Supplies, Hardware – Retail*
- WA State University Master Gardeners 509-735-3551 or 509-786-2226 or [www.gardening.wsu.edu/eastside](http://www.gardening.wsu.edu/eastside)

### **Landfill and Transfer Information**

- Waste Management of Kennewick 509-582-5121
- Kennewick Transfer Station Kennewick 509-586-7555
- Richland Landfill 509-942-7498
- Richland Solid Waste Collection 509-942-7497
- Basin Disposal Inc. (Prosser, Benton City, and Benton County) 509-547-2476
- Ed's Disposal (West Richland and Benton City) 509-547-2476

### **On-Site Burial**

- No restrictions in cities. Call if burying large amounts.
- No restrictions in Benton County on small amounts, larger amounts may need to be permitted 509-736-3086 or 509-786-5621