

*Compost is an essential component of fertile soil.
Making compost is fun and easy, saves money, and is good for the environment.*

Why Compost?

Compost is an essential component of fertile soil. It affects physical properties of soil such as structure, water retention, and erosion resistance.

- Composting is easy and can speed up natural decomposition.
- Composting saves money and disposal space.
- Compost protects the aquifer by reducing the need for synthetic lawn and garden chemicals because compost is a natural fertilizer and protects plants from disease.

What is Compost?

Have you ever walked through a forest and smelled a wonderful earthy smell? That odor comes from humus on the forest floor. Humus comes from decomposed organic matter (rotted plants and animals). Organic matter is decomposed by soil microorganisms into elements useable by plants. Compost is partly decayed organic matter and is used to increase the humus content in soil.

Soil is the surface layer of earth containing organic matter capable of supporting vegetation. A few inches to several feet thick, soil consists of fine rock material, organic matter, air and water. The arrangement of soil particles together with organic matter (including microorganisms and living roots) determines the soil's capacity to retain gases, water, and plant nutrients.

Holding Bins - are the simplest containers for yard debris. Composting in holding bins is the least labor-intensive and least time-consuming way to compost.

Turning Bin - is a series of three or more bins that allow waste to be turned from one bin to the next on a regular schedule. It is best suited for large volumes of yard debris and takes an area of at least 3' x 9'.

Tumblers are another option:

When buying or building a bin, make sure the dimensions are between 3'x3'x3' and 4'x4'x4' for optimum composting - *too small and the pile won't heat up; too large and the pile can become anaerobic and smell bad.*

more information on home composting is in the brown mailbox in The Green Zone Home Composting Demonstration Area, or at www.solidwaste.org.

Major funding for this area and its signage was provided by Wheelabrator Spokane Inc., the Spokane Regional Solid Waste System and the Washington State Department of Ecology. The Compost Demonstration area is maintained by the Spokane Master Composters/Recyclers. For more information call the Recycling Hot Line, 625-6800

The Green Zone map is on page 2.

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Home Composting

Materials to Compost

- Yard and garden trimmings
- Manures from herbivores
- Kitchen *vegetable* waste - no meats, fats, oils or dairy products
- Avoid persistent weeds and weed seeds
- No need for inoculants

Requirements for a Hot Pile

- Air (oxygen)
- Water (pile should be as damp as a wrung out sponge)
- Good mix of material (nitrogen and carbon in a ratio close to 30:1)
- Sufficient volume (3'x3'x3' - 4'x4'x4')
- A bin enclosure speeds the process and is neater

Composting Methods

- Passive pile - may take a year or more to produce finished compost
- Hot pile - tended regularly, with well prepared and mixed materials can have compost ready in 4 to 8 weeks

Compost Uses

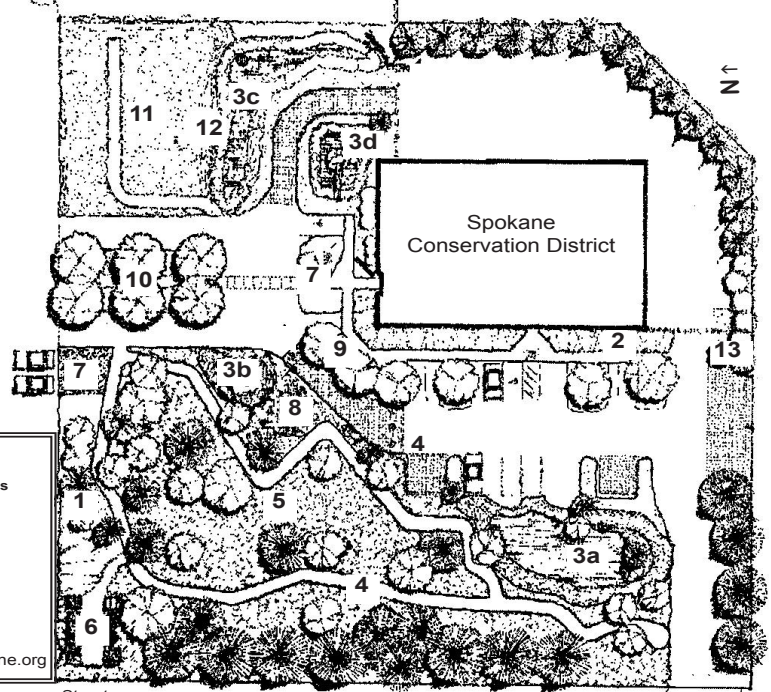
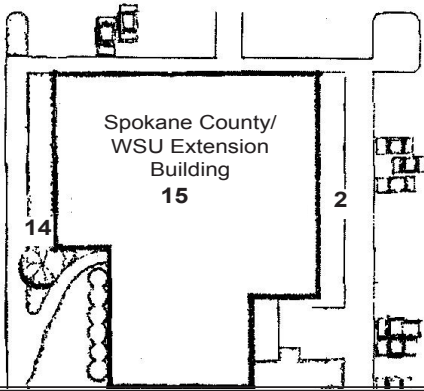
- Top dress lawns
- Mulch plants and trees
- Dig into clay or sandy soil to improve texture
- Mix into potting soil

The Home Composting Demonstration Area is #6 on The Green Zone map. The Green Zone is located at the Spokane Conservation District and WSU/Spokane County Extension, 210 & 222 N. Havana, Spokane WA 99202.
(509) 535-7274 (SCD)
(509) 477-2048 (WSU)

Home Composting (continued)

THE GREEN ZONE

Spokane County Fair & Expo Center
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Legend

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|------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Living Fence | 5. Arboretum | 11. Raised Bed Gardens |
| 2. Xeriscape Beds | 6. Composting Demonstration Area | 12. Temporary Nursery |
| 3. Wetlands | 7. Rock Gardens | 13. Storm Garden |
| a. Scrub Shrub Wetland | 8. Ornamental Grasses | 14. Shade Garden |
| b. Wet Meadow Wetland | 9. Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary | 15. Resource Center |
| c. Forested Wetland | | |
| d. Pond | | |
| 4. Pathways | 10. Street Trees | |

Download more information on each of the areas you wish to explore -- www.thegreenzone.org