



## **City of Grand Rapids Residential Composting**

### **What is compost?**

Most simply, compost is decomposed organic materials used as a soil conditioner and fertilizer, also known as humus. Compost is known as “gardener’s gold” because it improves soil structure, retains water, encourages root growth, aerates soil, and releases nutrients slowly.

### **What are the benefits of composting beyond gardening?**

- Recycles kitchen and yard waste (approximately 30% of household waste)
- Reduces landfill waste
- Reduces use of chemical fertilizers that harm the environment

### **Can I compost in the City of Grand Rapids?**

Yes! You can compost on the premises of an occupied residential dwelling if you follow a few simple rules.

- 1) Place materials in a fully enclosed compost receptacle constructed of rigid and durable materials that has a tightly fitted lid and a capacity not greater than 64 cubic feet.
- 2) Place the bin(s) in the rear yard only.
- 3) Place only materials identified below as acceptable for composting in the bin(s).
- 4) Keep the bin(s) tightly covered, except when depositing and removing materials.

Using the “pile” method or having exposed materials is not allowed. Placing animal waste, bones, meat, oils, fat, cooked foods, and other materials identified below under “NO” are strictly prohibited. The following materials are not allowed in construction of receptacles: burlap, tarp, vehicle tires, wire mesh, chicken wire, and flexible fencing.

### **What will happen if I don’t comply with the City’s composting rules?**

The City desires to encourage composting and promote sustainable living, while preserving quality of life in our neighborhoods that is free from rodents, animal harborage, and uncontrolled odors. Failure to follow the Residential Composting rules outlined above is a violation of City Code. Your property could be cited for such violations resulting in required removal of your compost materials and possible fines.

## What materials are acceptable for composting?

To avoid animal harborage, nuisances and odors, materials to be composted must be selected carefully. Items under “YES” can be placed in your compost bin, while items under “NO” are prohibited.

YES	NO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fruit and vegetable peelings</li><li>• Lettuce leaves, egg shells</li><li>• Coffee grounds, tea leaves/bags</li><li>• Grass and hedge trimmings</li><li>• Leaves (shredded, if possible)</li><li>• Spent flowers and garden clippings</li><li>• Young weeds without seeds</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cooked foods</li><li>• Grease, oils, fats</li><li>• Meat, fish, bones</li><li>• Dairy products, breads</li><li>• Animal waste, cat litter</li><li>• Diseased plants</li><li>• Invasive weeds, weeds with seeds</li></ul>

## How do I control odors?

Having the correct balance of “green” (fresh grass clippings, fruit/vegetable peelings) and “brown” (dry leaves/plants) materials is important for decomposition and odor control. The green materials have a high nitrogen content that causes the mixture to heat up and decompose more quickly. Turning or mixing the materials accelerates the rate of decomposition. A ratio of 1/3 green to 2/3 brown is a good mix.

## Where can I purchase a compost bin?

Compost bins (also called composters or compost digesters) are available online and at local home improvement stores. They come in a variety of styles and price ranges. Some examples are provided below.

