

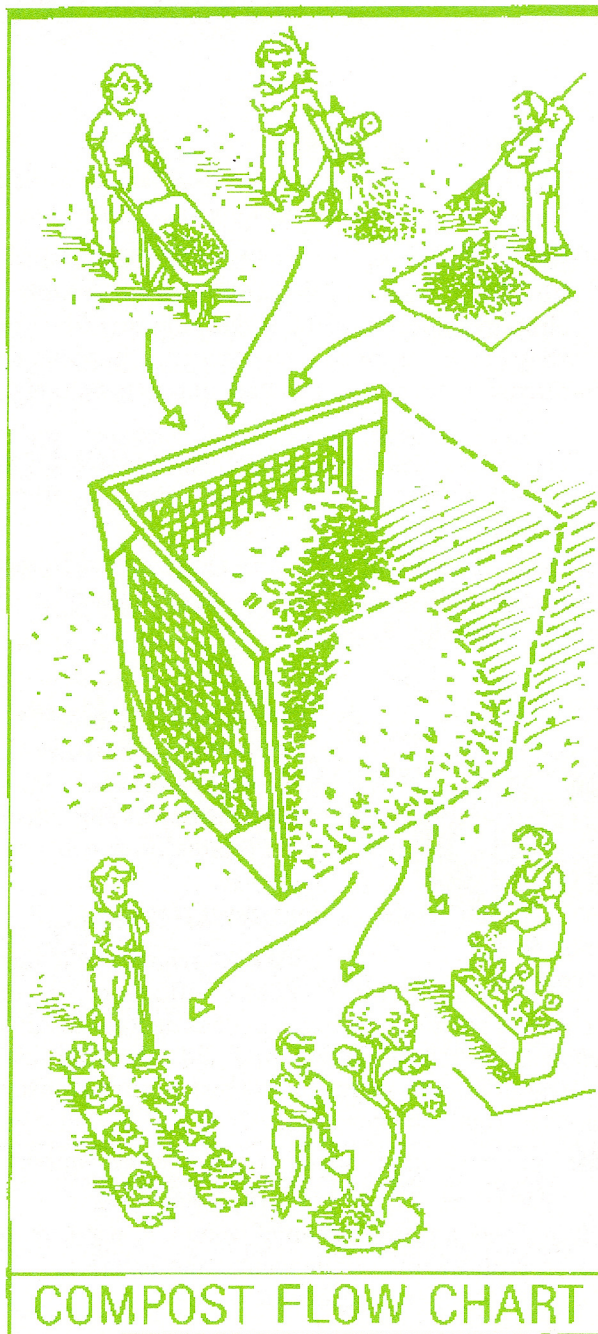
## HOW TO: COMPOSTING

### WHAT IS COMPOST?

Compost is a dark, crumbly, and earthy-smelling form of decomposing organic matter. Decomposition and recycling of organic wastes are an essential part of soil building and healthy plant growth in forests, meadows, and in your home garden.

### HOW CAN I USE COMPOST?

Compost can be used to enrich the flower and vegetable garden, to improve the soil around trees and shrubs, as a soil amendment for houseplants and planter boxes and, when screened, as part of a seed-starting mix or lawn top-dressing. Before they decompose, chipped woody wastes make excellent mulch or path material. After they decompose, these same woody wastes will add texture to garden soils.



### WHY SHOULD I MAKE COMPOST?

Composting is the most practical and convenient way to handle your yard wastes. It can be easier and cheaper than bagging these wastes or taking them to the transfer station. Compost also improves your soil and the plants growing in it. If you have a garden, a lawn, trees, shrubs, or even planter boxes, you have a use for compost.

By using compost, you return organic matter to the soil in a usable form. Organic matter in the soil improves plant growth by helping to break heavy clay soils into a better texture, by adding water and nutrient-holding capacity to sandy soils, and by adding essential nutrients to any soil. Improving your soil is the first step toward improving the health of your plants. Healthy plants help clean the air and conserve soil, making your area a healthier place to live.

### WHAT CAN I COMPOST?

Anything that was once alive can be composted.

However, some organic wastes should not be put into home composting systems.

#### **Do Compost in Yard Waste Bins**

Grass clippings • Leaves  
Flowers • Old plants  
Twigs • Annual Weeds  
Old potting soil

#### **Don't Compost in Yard Waste Bins**

Food scraps of any sort  
Dog & cat waste • Diseased plants • Weeds with seeds • Invasive weeds (Quack grass, Morning glory, Buttercup, etc.)

#### **Bury or Worm Compost These Food Wastes**

Vegetable scraps  
Bread & grains  
Coffee filters or tea bags

#### **Do Not Bury or Compost These Food Wastes**

Meat or fish parts  
Cheese, butter, milk  
Cooking oil & oily foods