

Composting: Turning Scraps into Black Gold

Composting is nature's way of recycling. The result of composting is a rich, crumbly, dark soil resulting from decomposing organic materials such as leaves, grass and biodegradable kitchen scraps. When used in your garden, this compost reduces the need for watering and fertilizer, while at the same time greatly enhancing your plant growth. Expert gardeners often refer to compost material as "black gold" because it acts as a natural fertilizer.



It's easy for anybody to start a compost pile in the back yard. It can be as simple as creating a small rounded wire fence or as sophisticated as buying a composter. Many different models are available, and they are inexpensive.

Grass clippings, leaves, sawdust, vegetable scraps, pine needles, egg shells, coffee grounds, as well as fruit and vegetable scraps can all be mixed together in a compost pile. The Environmental Protection Agency reports that nearly 50 percent of municipal waste is made up of leaves, yard waste, food scraps and paper. By creating a simple compost pile near your back gate, watershed residents can keep all of these items out of the solid waste stream trucked to regional landfills.

Home composting is the ultimate way to claim responsibility for the ton or two of compostable waste each individual generates per year. More sophisticated gardeners may also use red worms in compost bins to increase the pace of decomposition.

With water quality and land stewardship top priorities in the Chain of Lakes region, composting is a simple thing you can do to make a difference. It is a way to recycle without leaving home. Any area nursery can help landowners get started, plus the Internet is filled with ideas about different ways to start a compost pile. It's simple and inexpensive. And remember, the result will be a pile of "black gold."