

Compost Troubleshooting

| SYMPTOM | POSSIBLE CAUSE | SOLUTION/ALTERNATIVE |
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| Pile is damp and warm in the middle, but nowhere else | Pile may be too small | Gather enough material to make a pile 3' high, 3' wide, and 3' long |
| Pile does not get hot | If pile is moist and sweet smelling, it may not have enough nitrogen | Mix in fresh grass clippings, manure, blood meal, or other high nitrogen fertilizer |
| | If pile is very wet- perhaps smells sour, it may not be getting enough air inside | Turn the pile. Mix in dry sawdust, straw, or stalk to improve drainage and air flow |
| | Pile may be too small | Gather enough material to make a pile 3' high, 3' wide, and 3' long |
| | Pile was built gradually over a few weeks or longer | Let it compost slowly. If materials are still fresh, turn and mix in fresh grass clippings, manure, blood meal, or other high nitrogen fertilizer |
| Pile is dry throughout | Lack of Water | Turn the material and spray all materials with water. |
| Pile smells like rotten eggs, vinegar or garbage | Too wet, not enough oxygen | Turn the pile and mix in coarse dry materials such as leaves, straw or corn stalks. Cover with plastic during rainy weather |
| Pile smells like ammonia | Inappropriate materials such as food or pet waste in pile | Remove and dispose of inappropriate materials. |
| | Too much nitrogen | Turn the pile and mix in dry materials such as leaves, sawdust, shredded paper, straw, or corn stalks. |
| Pile is attracting dogs, raccoons, rats, flies, or other pests | Inappropriate materials such as food or pet waste in pile | Remove and dispose of inappropriate materials. |
| Pile contains earwigs, slugs, and other insects | No problem | Slugs should be removed and destroyed so that their eggs are not spread in the garden. |