

York Community Compost Co-Op: Composting Guide

Updated October 13, 2025

Welcome to the York Community Compost Co-Op! This guide will walk you through the basics of composting using the **lasagna method**, a simple and effective way to turn food and yard waste into rich compost. Composting helps reduce landfill waste, enriches soil, and supports York's growing community of sustainable living.

The Lasagna Method

The lasagna method (also called 'sheet composting') layers green and brown materials—just like a lasagna—to create balanced compost. It's easy to maintain, minimizes odors, and helps materials break down efficiently. The key is maintaining a **1:1 ratio of greens to browns**.

- **Green Materials (Nitrogen-rich):** fruit and veggie scraps, coffee grounds, fresh grass clippings.
- **Brown Materials (Carbon-rich):** dry leaves, shredded paper, cardboard, sawdust.
- **Layering:** Start with a brown base layer, then alternate layers of greens and browns. Always top off with browns to prevent smells.
- **Moisture:** Keep it as damp as a wrung-out sponge—too dry slows decomposition; too wet causes odor.
- **Turning:** Every few weeks, shift or mix your pile to add oxygen and speed up breakdown.

Common Composting Terms

- **Aerobic composting:** Decomposition using oxygen-loving microbes that prevent odor.
- **Carbon to Nitrogen ratio (C:N):** The balance between brown (carbon) and green (nitrogen) materials.
- **Finished compost:** Dark, crumbly soil-like material ready for use.
- **Leachate:** Liquid that drains from compost—avoid excess moisture to prevent this.
- **Microbes:** Tiny organisms that power decomposition.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **How long does composting take?** Typically 3–6 months depending on weather, materials, and turning frequency.
- **Does it smell?** A healthy compost pile smells earthy. Odors mean it's too wet or lacks browns—just add more carbon.
- **Can I compost in winter?** Yes, decomposition slows down but continues. Add browns and turn in spring.

- **When is compost ready?** When it's dark, crumbly, and unrecognizable from the original materials.
- **What can I use compost for?** Gardens, houseplants, landscaping, or community projects.

More Resources & Reading

- EPA: Composting at Home
- MasterClass: Lasagna Composting Guide
- Penn State Extension: Home Composting
- Rodale Institute: Lasagna Composting

For more information or to join the York Community Compost Co-Op, sign up here: [Join YCCC](#)