What is Compost?

Compost is organic material that can be used as a medium to grow plants or as a soil amendment. Mature compost is a stable material with a content called **humus** that is dark brown or black and has a soil-like, earthy smell. It is created by combining organic wastes (e.g., yard trimmings, food wastes, manures) in proper ratios into piles, rows, or vessels; adding bulking agents (e.g., wood chips) as necessary to accelerate the breakdown of organic materials; and allowing the finished material to fully stabilize and mature through a curing process.

Natural composting began with the first plants on earth and has been going on ever since. As vegetation falls to the ground, it slowly decays, providing minerals and nutrients needed for plants, animals, and microorganisms. Mature compost, however, includes the production of high temperatures to destroy pathogens and weed seeds that natural decomposition does not destroy.

(SOURCE: EPA/gov)

What to Compost

•Cardboard rolls, clean paper, coffee grounds and filters, cotton rags, dryer and vacuum cleaner lint, eggshells, fireplace ashes, fruits and vegetables, grass clippings, hair and fur, hay and straw, houseplants, leaves, nut shells, sawdust, shredded newspaper, tea bags, wood chips, wool rags & yard trimmings.

What NOT to Compost

•Coal or charcoal ash - might contain substances harmful to plants
•Dairy products (butter, egg yolks, milk, sour cream, yogurt) - creates odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies
•Diseased or insect-ridden plants - diseases or insects might survive and be transferred back to other plants
•Fats, grease, lard, or oils - creates odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies
•Meat or fish bones and scraps - creates odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies
•Pet wastes (dog/cat feces, soiled cat litter) - might contain parasites, bacteria, germs, pathogens and viruses harmful to humans
•Yard trimmings treated with chemical pesticides - might kill beneficial composting organisms
•Meat or fish bones and scraps - creates odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies

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•Yard trimmings treated with chemical pesticides - might kill beneficial composting organisms
•Black walnut tree leaves or twigs - releases substances that might be harmful to plants
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For further information please check out the following websites:

•urbanext.illinois.edu/tog/compost.cfm
•epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/rrr/composting/index.htm