COMPOST

Compost is merely the end product of controlled decay. Organic matter, water, and microbes are mixed in appropriate percentages, thus optimizing conditions for fast production of a healthy soil conditioner, a light, rich loam.

1. **Save** kitchen scraps, including coffee grounds. NO meat or dairy scraps need apply. NO kitty litter or dog droppings.
2. **Save** grass clippings and raked leaves. If the leaves are shredded the pile will get hotter faster. Make sure that the lawn clippings do not come from a lawn that has been treated with herbicides. There are reports that some of these chemicals survive even the high temperature of an active compost pile. Shredded newspaper can be used, but avoid colored papers and inks.
3. **Build** a bin. The bin should be placed in light shade. Full summer sun can kill off surface microorganisms. To heat up the compost heap must be at least 1 cubic yard in size. Commercial compost bins are available, but bins are easy to build. A home built bin can range from a simple loop of wire mesh, to a wooden box with removable sides, to a deluxe design which allows space for various heaps in different stages of production.
4. **Proceed**. What you are doing is creating a healthy home for a microbial community. One that will transform your wastes into rich humus. The general principal is that the microorganisms need carbonaceous materials, which come from the leaves, and nitrogenous materials, which come from the green material. Mix approximately 2 to 4 parts of green (like grass clippings), and 10 parts of brown (leaves,), a shovel full of ordinary soil (the microbes have to come from somewhere), and the table scraps. Water until just damp.
5. **Turn**. When you think of it turn the pile. Three times a week is ideal. You want to introduce more oxygen into the mix. The pile should be warm, eventually 160ºF in the center. Water the pile regularly.
6. **Use**. If the mixture has been well-balanced and tended to, it should be ready in about three months, longer in cold weather. When the humus, no longer waste at this point, is ready it can be used as a top dressing, as a soil additive, and as houseplant fertilizer (make a “tea” by adding the compost to water and water plants with the mixture).