

# IN THE LOOP!

Free newsletter of MassRecycle, the Massachusetts Recycling Coalition

Issue #11, September 2011

## Keys to Successful Composting!

By Dmitriy Nikolayev and Kathleen Ohlson



As the fall with its abundance of yard waste approaches, we wanted to talk you into composting in your back yard.

Composting is basically feeding little “critters” that naturally turn organic material into a valuable soil amendment. These microbes require the following four “food groups”:

- Carbon-rich (“brown/dry”) organic material (autumn leaves, straw, wood chips, etc.);
- Nitrogen-rich (“green/wet”) organic material (grass clippings, fruit and vegetable food waste, etc.);
- Air and
- Moisture.

To make composting easy keep these key steps in mind:

- **Change behavior.** Like anything new, composting requires creating new routines. When you begin, place the compost pile or bin in a place that’s convenient for you to tend in any season.
- **Remember to water.** The pile must always be moist, but not soaked. Piles that are soaked develop odor issues, while dry piles take a very long time to turn into compost.
- **Turn the pile.** This is the equivalent to turning off the oxygen for the critters that turn organic mater into compost. Piles that are not mixed take longer to turn and sometimes develop odors, so set a goal of turning a pile at least once a month.
- **Remember the “brown” ingredients.** As you add food scraps to the pile, don’t forget to mix them with yard waste to keep the optimal ratio of 1:3 “green” to “brown.” Otherwise, this may lead to odors. If you are running out of ideas for brown material, use shredded paper.
- **Inappropriate materials.** Your pet critters are vegetarian, so please avoid animal proteins (no meat)!

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## Addressing Home Composting Anxieties

In a recent MassRecycle poll, three common composting issues were revealed, but there are very easy ways to fix them.

1. **The time needed to get a finished product.** Keep in mind, compost takes a few months to make. The composting process slows down because of a lack of water and infrequent turning. So remember to turn the material monthly and properly mulch the “brown” material to speed up its breakdown.
2. **Odor issues.** This problem happens only when there’s a lack of oxygen inside the pile and excess of “green” material. To alleviate this, turn the pile more often, add more “brown” material, and let the pile dry up a little (but not completely).
3. **Animal and birds.** To keep your compost safe, purchase an enclosed composter or include a rodent-proof mesh bottom and a cover for your pile.

## Nov. 15 - America Recycles Day

The only nationally recognized day dedicated to the promotion of recycling programs in the United States. For more information, visit

<http://americarecyclesday.org/>

## Stay in the Loop!

**Make sure we email you the next issue!**

Sign up online at [www.MassRecycle.org](http://www.MassRecycle.org) using the “Sign up for Free Email Newsletter” button.

Though composting takes time, if you remember these tips — keep a ratio of 1:3 “green” to “brown” materials, water regularly, and turn the pile — in three to eight months you will get a great product for your lawn or garden.

## Green Back to School Tips

By Santa Luangkham

There is no better time to “green-up” your life than at the start of the new school year. Here are some simple tips to get you and your family started:

- **Purchase what you need.** Today’s hyper-consumption culture can extend to buying green. For some people, it is natural to think that if something is labeled “environmentally friendly,” then you can use more of it. Bear in mind that regardless of how earth friendly a product may be, it still requires energy to produce, resources to create, and transport to get it to us. For every 4 pounds of product, manufacturers create 11 pounds of waste. Even in the world of green shopping, it is still a case of everything in moderation.
- **The fourth (4th) R:** Re-think, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Find products with less packaging. Take reusable bags on shopping trips. (Some places will give you 5 cents for each reusable bag.) Reuse products creatively. Recycle what is left.
- **E-cycle.** Electronics need to be continuously replaced and upgraded. Fads and fashions may make you believe you need to shop and shop to stay current and on the cutting edge. Opt to reuse items, donate and repair if broken. This will also help save money to go towards things that really matter. If donation or repair is not an option, take it to your municipal recycling center or electronics store, as this will keep hazardous substances out of the landfill.
- **Waste-Free Lunches.** Invest in reusable lunch bags, food containers and water bottles. Reuse your utensils -- bring in a set of silverware and leave it at work/school or in your lunch bag.
- **Commute without pollution.** Use public transportation, carpool, walk, or bike whenever possible to reduce air pollution and save on rising fuel costs.
- **Do your part.** It is never too late to start. Every effort will help contribute to greening your world. Also, at the end of the day, relax by enjoying the outdoors at the park, a garden, or even in your backyard.

*Save the Date!*

## 2011 ‘Green Binnie’ Recycling Awards

Tuesday, November 15, 6:00 - 9:00 PM  
National Heritage Museum  
Lexington, MA

A select group of individuals, businesses, municipalities, and organizations will be recognized for their achievements in and contribution towards recycling and waste reduction in Massachusetts.

### The Celebration will include:

- Wine tasting
- Silent auction
- Live music
- Hors d'oeuvres and Dessert
- Networking
- Award ceremony

### More information at

[www.massrecycle.org/awards](http://www.massrecycle.org/awards)

Tickets: \$25 in advance, \$35 at door

### Thank you to our sponsors:

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## About MassRecycle

MassRecycle is a non-profit statewide coalition that works to:

- Strengthen local recycling programs,
- Educate businesses and the public about sustainable practices,
- Advocate for recycling in the Legislature,
- Reward recycling champions by presenting annual awards.



Join us at [www.massrecycle.org](http://www.massrecycle.org)!