

THE EARTH MACHINE

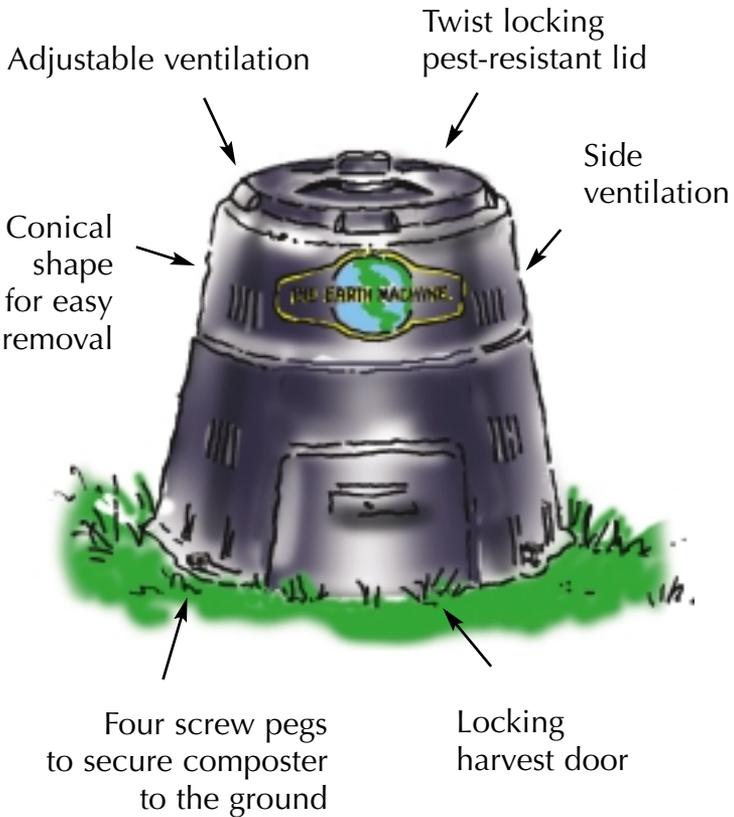
HOME COMPOSTING HANDBOOK



All you really need
to know about
composting...
It's easy!

Features of your Earth Machine backyard composter

Ten Year Warranty



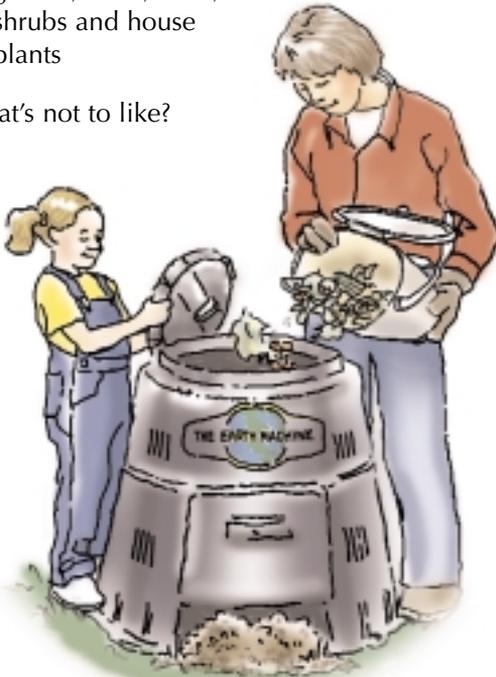
Research & writing by REIC Perth
Illustrations & layout by TD Graham & Associates
January 2004
Printed on recycled paper using vegetable-based ink.

HOME COMPOSTING HANDBOOK

So you've decided to try your hand at Home Composting. Congratulations! Sit back and relax, because composting is an amazingly easy way for you to make a difference. In less than ten minutes a week, you can:

- Reduce the amount of garbage you generate by 25% or more – that's less tax dollars spent on collection and disposal
- Create wheelbarrows full of valuable compost to add to your garden, lawn, trees, shrubs and house plants

What's not to like?



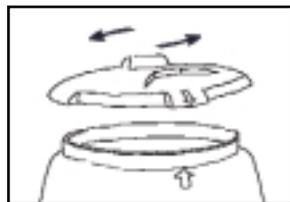
Inside this Book...



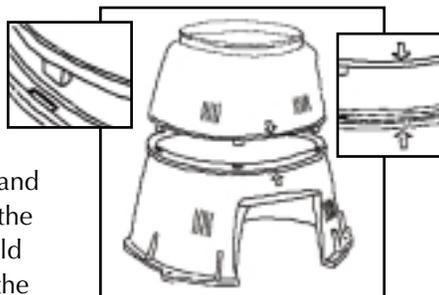
| | |
|------------------|----|
| Assembly | 2 |
| Location | 4 |
| In The Kitchen | 5 |
| What to Compost | 6 |
| How to Compost | 7 |
| The Four Seasons | 8 |
| Harvesting | 10 |
| Using Compost | 11 |
| FAQ's | 12 |
| Grasscycling | 15 |
| The Big Picture | 16 |

ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1 – Twist and remove the lid.



Step 2 – Place the bottom section on the ground, and set the top section on top of it. **IMPORTANT:** Make sure that the arrows on the top and bottom sections line up. Also, the bottom of the top section should sit in the groove on the top of the bottom section.



Step 3 – Check the outside and inside with your hand to ensure the 6 tabs line up with the 6 slots.



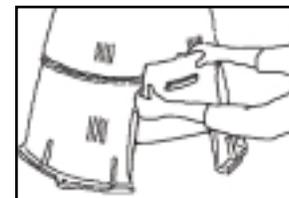
Step 4 – To ensure the tabs are completely in the slots, push down firmly on the two halves of the composter starting at the arrows and working fully around the composter rim.



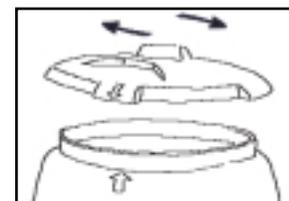
Step 5 – To confirm that all 6 tabs are in place, turn the unit upside down and make a visual check.



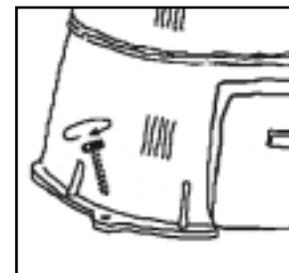
Step 6 – Slide the harvest door in place, bending slightly if necessary.



Step 7 – Put the lid on by lining up the arrow on the lid with the arrow on the top of the composter. Twist the lid to lock or control ventilation.



Step 8 – Once you have determined the location (see next page), you can anchor the composter to the ground by screwing the four pegs into the ground at a slight angle. To maintain correct hole spacing, ensure the harvest door is in place before screwing down the pegs.



*It's easy
– now you're ready!*

LOCATING & INSTALLING YOUR COMPOSTER



The most important factor for locating your composter is **CONVENIENCE**. You will be adding material several times each week, even in winter, so set it up as close to your kitchen as possible.

Some first-time composters make the mistake of hiding it in the back of the yard, thinking it will smell or attract pests, and then find it inconvenient. This handbook will show you how to compost easily and trouble-free, so don't hide your composter – be proud of it!

Once you have chosen your location, just set your composter in the desired location and secure it with the four plastic screw pegs. You are now ready to compost.



It helps to put your composter in a well-drained spot. You can speed things up by cutting out the sod under the composter to invite worms and microbes in and improve drainage.

IN THE KITCHEN

You will need a pail with a lid, preferably about 2 gallons (8 litres), either a commercial unit or a reused food pail. Some commercial units, such as Norseman Plastics' *Kitchen Collector*, offer a cupboard door mounting option and an oval shape to facilitate the emptying of plates.

The key is a tight seal on the lid to keep fruit flies away, and a size that allows you to easily empty kitchen scraps into.

To keep material from sticking to the bottom and sides, line the pail with a sheet of newspaper or paper towel. When you empty the pail into your composter every couple of days, it will all slide cleanly out. Then give it a quick rinse and re-line it. The newspaper or paper towel will compost fine.



WHAT TO COMPOST

Your composter will work best if it is fed a diet of green (nitrogen-rich) and brown (carbon-rich) materials. Check out the list of kitchen and yard waste “greens” and “browns” that will keep your composter happy.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Kitchen Greens Fruit scraps, vegetable scraps Houseplant cuttings Coffee grounds Rice & pasta Egg shells Tea bags</p>  | <p>Kitchen Browns Coffee filters, stale bread Paper napkins & towels Dryer lint Hair</p>  |
| <p>Yard Greens</p>  <p>Flowers Vegetables Plant trimmings Hedge clippings Grass (small amounts)</p> | <p>Yard Browns</p>  <p>Leaves Straw or hay Small twigs/chips Dried grass and weeds</p> |

- Don't Compost**
- Meat, fish or bones
 - Dairy products
 - Oils or fats
 - Sauces
 - Ashes
 - Pet waste
 - Diseased plants
 - Mature weeds with seeds



HOW TO COMPOST

Composting is easy – it happens on its own. However, there are a few things you can do to speed up the composting process. Just follow these four steps.

Keep the material in your composter about as moist as a wrung-out sponge.



CHOP – It helps to chop up larger items like watermelon rinds or corn cobs before putting them in your kitchen bucket.



EMPTY – Once your kitchen bucket is full, take it to your composter and tip it into your composter.



STIR – Mix the new material into the existing pile using a compost turner, pitchfork or other garden tool. This also adds oxygen, a key component to successful composting.



COVER – Cover your food waste with a handful of old leaves, other dried yard waste or soil. This will add carbon and reduce the chance of odors and fruit flies. Then put the lid back on and let it “cook”.



THE FOUR SEASONS OF COMPOSTING

Spring

Stir well and add some soil to kick-start your composter. Dig out any finished compost from the bottom to use in your lawn or garden.

Summer

Keep your composter humming by stirring it frequently and covering fresh material with leaves. If the compost looks dry, add some water.

Winter

With the colder temperatures, your compost will decompose slower. Don't worry, let it fill up. Once spring comes it will all decompose rapidly.

Fall

Harvest Time! Clean out your compost and dig the finished material into your garden. If possible, save some leaves to add to the composter during the year.



HARVESTING

After a few months, your kitchen scraps near the bottom of your composter will have decomposed to a point where you cannot identify the materials you added, and will look much like soil. There are two ways of harvesting this finished compost, one when you just want a few shovels of compost, and another when you want as much finished compost as possible, or to make maximum space for fresh scraps.



Harvesting Small Amounts

Your *Earth Machine* composter comes with a door at the bottom for quick access to finished compost. Just lift the door and dig the material out of the bottom. What could be simpler?



Accessing The Pile

There are times when you want to access the entire pile. All you do is:

- Unscrew the four pegs
- Lift the composter up and off the pile, and set it aside
- Place any unfinished compost in a container or pile
- Load the finished compost into a wheelbarrow
- Replace your bin in the original footprint and screw it down
- Put the unfinished compost back in the composter

You may want to use a compost screen to help separate the unfinished material from the finished compost.

USING COMPOST

Compost is a nutrient-rich soil amendment, created by the natural decomposition of kitchen and yard waste by microbes, worms and other organisms. When mixed with your soil, it will revitalize it, make it healthier and more productive, and increase moisture retention.

In Your Garden

Spread compost in your vegetable or flower garden in spring or fall, and work it into the soil.



On Your Lawn

Top-dress your lawn with compost in the spring or fall. This will help maintain healthy soil structure and build your topsoil. It helps to screen the compost first so it spreads easily.

Around Trees and Shrubs

Spreading compost around the base of trees or shrubs is another easy way to put your compost to use. Your trees and shrubs will love you for it.



You can make your own compost screen in minutes with 1/4 inch hardware cloth and a wood frame.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Will my compost smell?

A. Properly running composters should not give off any unpleasant odors – if anything, they should be almost sweet-smelling. If you do notice any unpleasant odors, mix it well with a compost turner or pitchfork to get more air into the pile, and add some more “browns” (e.g. leaves) to dry it out. Don’t add piles of grass clippings all at once, as they will give off an ammonia-like smell (see page 15 for tips on managing grass clippings). Also, make sure not to put any meat or dairy products in your composter.

Q. How long before I get compost?

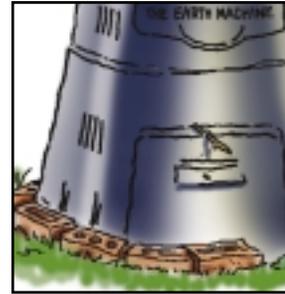
A. Most people find that they can harvest finished compost from the bottom of their pile every 6 months or so. However, if you have a good mix of “greens” and “browns”, stir thoroughly and frequently, and keep it from getting too wet or dry, you will find you can “cook” a batch of compost in as little as 6 weeks.

Q. What do I do to get rid of fruit flies?

A. During the summer, you may be greeted by fruit flies when you open your kitchen pail or composter. To keep them at bay in the kitchen, make sure to close the lid on your kitchen pail tightly and empty your pail frequently. At your composter, add leaves or a thin layer of soil each time you add fresh material.



Q. What can I do to keep raccoons, squirrels, rodents and dogs out of my composter?



Q. My composter fills up too quickly. What should I do?

Q. How should I handle yard waste?



A. Occasionally, an eager pest will decide to take a liking to your composter, so here are a few things to keep those critters away:

- Avoid all food scraps with meat, dairy, oil or fat
- Bury fresh material in the compost pile
- Keep the door fastened by placing a stick through the matching holes in the door and composter
- Place bricks or flat stones around the base of the composter
- Add dog hair to the compost

If the problem persists, you can line the bottom of the composter with a layer of chicken wire.

A. Use your *Earth Machine* primarily for kitchen waste, as yard waste will fill it up in a hurry. If you generate too much kitchen waste for one composter, consider getting a second one.

A. Consider buying or making a large yard waste composter, and keep it close to your *Earth Machine* so you have a ready source of cover material. Remember to keep some bags of leaves aside for use throughout the year.



Check with your municipality regarding yard waste collection or depot options.

Q. How moist should my composter pile be?

A. The rule of thumb is to keep the material as moist as a wrung-out sponge. In arid climates, this means you will have to periodically add water to the pile, or make a point of adding wet materials to the kitchen pail (e.g. leftover coffee). In rainy areas or seasons, you may need to add dry leaves, aerate the pile with a pitchfork or compost turner, or leave the lid of compost off on sunny days.

Q. Is there a way to make winter composting in the snowbelt easier?

A. Hopefully, your composter is located close to your back door so you don't have to shovel a long path to it. If not, leave an old garbage can next to the back door and empty your kitchen pail directly into it. Once spring comes you can just add it to your composter, together with some leaves or other browns.

For more information

www.earthmachine.com



In cold climates, use saved bags of leaves as insulation around your composter.



GRASSCYCLING

Why rake, bag & landfill your grass clippings?

Some people still rake, bag and landfill their grass clippings, just because it's what they've always done, or because they think clippings cause thatch. The truth, as most lawn care professionals will tell you, is that grass clippings do not cause thatch, and in fact help keep your lawn healthy. So start **GRASSCYCLING** – just let you clippings lie where they fall.

TIPS

- Keep your mower blades sharp.
- Don't cut too short – never shorter than 7 cm (2.5 inches).
- Cut frequently – never more than one-third of the grass blade at a time, so cut as soon as the lawn is about 10 cm high (4 inches).
- Don't over-fertilize or over-water your lawn – that will just make it grow faster and create more work. Grasscycling plus occasional top-dressing with compost is likely all the fertilizing you need.

BENEFITS

- Less work for you – less raking and carrying bags to the curb.
- Free fertilizer for your lawn.
- Less tax dollars on collection and landfilling.



If you still find too many clumps of cut grass for your liking, consider a mulching mower, or replace your current blade with a mulching blade.

Happy Grasscycling!

The Big Picture

Glad to have you composting!
By composting and recycling, you can reduce the amount of garbage you generate by up to **80%**. It quickly becomes routine and makes a big difference.

The added bonus is that the compost you generate will make your garden and lawn healthier, and less dependent on chemicals, fertilizers and watering.



Home composting, combined with recycling and yard waste programs, can reduce your waste by up to 80%.



Congratulations!



You are one of over 2 million users of Earth Machine backyard composters. A family using an Earth Machine can divert over 500 pounds of kitchen scraps and yard waste a year. That's over one billion pounds of garbage transformed into valuable compost for our gardens each and every year!

The Earth Machine



Brought to you by:

NORSEMAN
PLASTICS



The Norseman Waste Diversion Family

www.earthmachine.com