

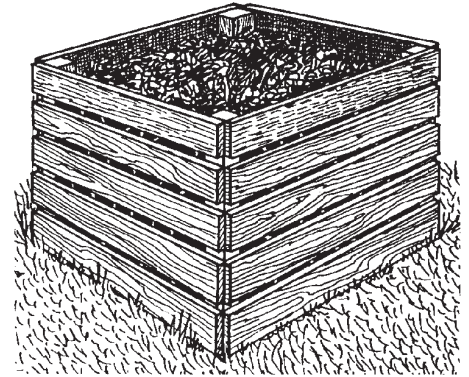
Compost Units Series

Wooden-Pallet and Wire-Mesh Compost Bins

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Wooden-Pallet Compost Bin

A holding unit can be built inexpensively using wooden pallets. Pine painted with a nontoxic preservative or latex paint or recycled composite lumber may be used to make a nicer looking bin. The costs vary, depending on whether new lumber or pallets are used. Used pallets are often available from manufacturers and landfills.



Wooden-Pallet Compost Bin

Building a Holding Unit Using Wooden Pallets

Materials

- Four wooden pallets (five pallets if you want a bottom in the container), sized to make a four-sided container at least 3 feet x 3 feet x 3 feet
 - Nails/screws
 - Wire
- OR
- Two 8-foot lengths of 2 x 4 untreated pine painted with a nontoxic preservative or latex paint or recycled composite lumber
 - Five 12-foot lengths of 1 x 6 untreated pine painted with a nontoxic preservative or latex paint or recycled composite lumber
 - Galvanized 8d nails (1 pound) or screws
- Saw
 - Sledge hammer
 - Claw hammer
 - Work gloves

1. Nail, wire or screw four pallets together to make a four-sided bin at least 3 feet x 3 feet x 3 feet. The bin is then ready to use.
2. A fifth pallet can be used as a base to allow more air to get into the pile and to increase the stability of the bin. While allowing more air through the bin, this can cause the organic material in the bin to dry; check bin during dry periods and add moisture if needed. Having organic material in direct contact with the soil provides easy access for decomposers such as earthworms and sow bugs into the bin.

Building a Holding Unit Using Lumber

1. Saw the 8-foot lengths of 2 x 4 lumber into four pieces, each 4 feet long, to be used as corner posts.
2. Choose a 3-foot-square site for your compost bin. Use the sledge hammer to pound the four posts into the ground 3 feet apart, at the corners of the square.

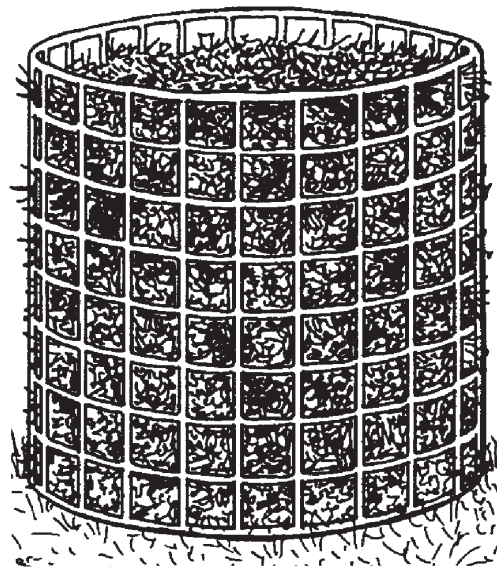
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3. Saw each of the five 12-foot boards into four 3-foot pieces. Allowing five boards to a side, and starting at the bottom, nail the boards to the posts to make a four-sided container. Leave 2 inches between the boards to allow air into the pile.
4. If you wish to decrease your composting time, build a second holding unit so that the wastes in one can mature while you add wastes to the other.

Wire-Mesh Compost Bin

A wire-mesh holding unit is inexpensive and easy to build out of either galvanized wire or hardware cloth. (Nongalvanized wire can also be used, but will not last very long.) Posts provide more stability for a wire bin but make the bin difficult to move. A wire-mesh bin made without posts is easy to lift and provides access to the compost that is already “done” at the bottom of the pile while the compost at the top of the pile is still decomposing.



Wire-Mesh Compost Bin

Building a Wire-Mesh Holding Unit Using Wire

Materials

- At least a 10-foot length of 36-inch-wide 1-inch galvanized wire
OR
- At least a 10-foot length of 1/2-inch-wide hardware cloth

(NOTE: The maximum bin diameter for a given length of wire is the length of wire divided by 3.14.)

- Heavy wire for ties
- Three or four 4-foot-tall wooden or metal posts (for wire bin)
- Heavy-duty wire or tin snips
- Pliers
- Hammer (for wire bin)
- Metal file (for hardware cloth bin)
- Work gloves

1. Fold back 3 to 4 inches of wire at each end of the cut piece to provide a strong, clean edge that will not poke or snag and that will be easy to latch.
2. Stand the wire in a circle and set it in place for the compost pile.
3. Cut the heavy wire into lengths for ties. Attach the ends of the wire together with the wire ties, using pliers.
4. Space wood or metal posts around the inside of the wire circle. Holding the posts tightly against the wire, pound them firmly into the ground to provide support.

Adding Wastes

Waste can be added as it becomes available. Chopping and shredding wastes speeds up the process. If you have two units, when the first one is full, let compost mature and add waste to the second unit.

Maintaining the Compost

Turning or mixing will speed the composting process. Maintain moisture during dry spells. Compost should be ready in one year.

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Printed by University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Printing Services.



Printed on Recycled Paper

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