



## **Family Earth Day Project— Create a Backyard Compost Bin**

Families can design a compost bin to recycle household waste into a soil conditioner. Composting is a natural process that helps return decaying matter back to the earth while reducing waste sent to landfills. Compost bins can be purchased from \$40 to \$400 dollars, but they are merely containers with holes or vents. Look up “backyard composting” on the internet and you see the many options and designs that exist—all working to do the same thing—create compost. Follow these easy steps to make your own DIY Compost Tumbler.

Reuse or purchase an inexpensive metal or plastic trash can. One with a locking lid is ideal. Lids can also be kept in place with elastic cords. With a secure lid, the bin can be tipped over and rolled around for increased air circulation.

Drill 1/4 inch diameter holes in the top, sides and bottom of the bin. Drilling a lot of small holes is suggested to keep the bin rodent proof but still offer air circulation. Locate the bin on the ground near your garden for easy access. You are now ready to start composting.

Add fruit and vegetable scraps, leaves, coffee grounds, straw, egg shells and human hair. Grass clippings can also be added, if your lawn is not treated with chemicals. Small twigs should be layered in the bin to create a few air pockets. Meats, cheeses, and oily foods should be avoided. If the contents of the bin seem dry, add water. If contents seem too soggy, add leaves, straw or paper. Small red worms may be added to the container to accelerate decomposition. Red worms can be purchased at a bait shop or ordered online. If your bin sits directly on the ground, the worms from your yard will enter the holes in bottom without



your help.

Over time, these materials that once came from the earth will be ready to return to the earth. After 6 months or so, the finished compost will accumulate at the bottom of the bin. To reach the black compost, you may have to pull out some of the top materials you put in. At that point, adding a second bin is a worthwhile idea to flip flop contents back and forth. Apply compost to flowers beds, vegetables and shrubs for continued growth and water retention in the soil.

The library and internet have an abundance of free information on this subject. Many varieties of compost bins are available at big box stores as well, but this DIY project is an inexpensive way to get started.



**Help the planet. Start Composting!**

For More Information go to:

[illinoiscomposts.org](http://illinoiscomposts.org)

