

pile four feet high, six feet wide, and eight feet long will be adequate for the average home grounds. This will accommodate about seven cubic yards of compost.

The width and length of the compost pile may vary to suit the site, but its height should not exceed five feet. One reason is that the organic matter will compact from its own weight, curtailing air circulation and allowing too much heat to build up within the pile. Too much heat will kill off desirable bacteria, and the lack of air encourages anaerobic bacteria which produce a foul odor.

Selecting the Site: Select a site which is as level as possible and cannot be seen easily from the home or public street. If the site does not hold water naturally, dig a pit 10 to 12 inches deep and begin the compost heap in the pit. The extra soil may be used on the pile. A clay base is recommended, as water will not drain from the site as rapidly as in other kinds of soil.

Building the Pile: After the pit has been dug, place a 4 to 6 inch layer of organic materials into the pit. Spread mixed fertilizer and lime evenly over the layer. Then cover the organic matter with a 4 to 6 inch layer of loam soil and water it thoroughly. Repeat this process until the desired height is attained. For a pile 4 ft. x 6 ft. x 8 ft. the fertilizer should be applied at a rate of 20 to 24 pounds per each layer of organic matter and lime should be applied at the rate of 5 pounds per each layer of organic matter.

Encase the entire pile with a 4 to 6 inch layer of soil, hay, or burlap to retain heat. Make certain that the top of the pile is dish-shaped to hold water. Thoroughly mix the pile by turning it several times at 6 to 12-week intervals with a spading fork. Re-encase the heap after each turning. The composting process is usually completed in three months if started in the spring or early summer, or by the following spring if started in late summer or fall.

Building a Compost Bin: Bins can be constructed from 2" x 12" boards slotted into 4" x 4" corner posts with 1-2" spacing between the boards to allow for air circulation. The use of bins as a place to collect organic materials has proven beneficial for many reasons. First, animals do not scatter the material, and second, it gives the landscape a more finished appearance, especially if the compost heap is within easy view. It can also reduce the physical effort of periodically turning the compost. A compost bin with three compartments has special advantages. One is for a completed compost, the second for material being composted, and the third is for collecting additional organic matter. This will assure available compost year round. A three-compartment bin is especially beneficial if the organic matter is allowed to decompose for two years.

The size of the bins may vary with the amount of compost required and the amount of space available. Air circulation is important when building a compost bin. A fine mesh wire may be substituted for the wood. If a permanent compost bin is desired, it can be constructed of concrete block turned on the side. In either case, front gates should be provided for easy access to the compost.

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