

## PUT THE ACTION INTO SOCIAL ACTION

Now that you've planted a garden, how can you keep the soil nourished and fertilized—without using chemicals? One way to do this is to **make your own compost bin**. The compost is a **natural fertilizer**, is **safer** for the environment, and **saves money**. Plus, it's an excellent **educational opportunity** for kids.



A compost bin will save money on fertilizers, maintain soil health, and keep all those food scraps from rotting in a dump and belching methane (a greenhouse gas) into the atmosphere. It takes up to 18 years for a corn cob to decompose in a landfill, but only a couple of months in a compost pile. The material produced in the compost bin is **rich in nutrients** for your yard (it can be put right onto your grass), garden, or flower beds. Plus, compost can be used to grow new food, making it the ultimate recycler—now that's eco-friendly!

Compost bins are made from **food and house/yard waste**, which means that you do not put these materials in a plastic bag that is then deposited in a landfill. Not all food and yard wastes can be put into a composting bin. **Some of the organic materials** to put into your composting bin include coffee grounds and filters; fruits and vegetable scraps; egg shells; grass clippings; leaves; nut shells; shredded newspapers; and fireplace ashes.

**Avoid putting the following** in your compost bin: meat/fish bones, dog waste, yard trimmings that have been chemically treated, and diseased plants.



### GREEN TIP #5: MAKE YOUR OWN COMPOST BIN

You do not have to go out and purchase an expensive compost bin. This project will run just a few dollars and can be completed in less than 15 minutes!

#### MATERIALS:

- Large trash can with a lid that locks on
- A simple platform of some sort (a wooden plant stand on wheels works well)
- Screws (to attach the platform to the trash can)
- A drill with a large drill bit

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

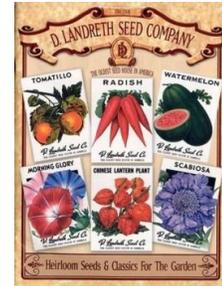
1. With your drill, make about 20 to 25 holes along the lid, bottom, and sides of your trash can.
2. Using your drill again, attach the platform to the bottom of your bin. Don't cover up the holes that you've made on the bottom of the bin. (Or, just drill a few more holes in the bottom.) This platform allows for drainage from the compost, which also saves the grass underneath.
3. Collect some of the items on the approved list and put them in the bin to start composting. You can keep a coffee can on your countertop to collect food scraps, etc., each day. Empty it into the compost bin outside from time to time.
4. Every couple of days, go out to the yard and put your trash can on its side. Roll it around for a couple minutes. Then, sit it back up.
5. Continue adding more items from the approved list.
6. Use the rich, dark soil you created!

By summer's end, you should be able to supplement your garden with the summer's worth of "trash" that would have found itself in the landfill if it hadn't been for your small investment.

**NOTE:** This project is best suited to Spring, Summer, and Autumn. You *can* put waste in the bin during the winter. Some items might freeze, but when they thaw, you'll have that much more stuff to start out strong!

## GREEN CRAFT: TAKE A NATURE WALK

1. **IDENTIFY FLOWERS & PLANTS:** Using those flower and gardening catalogs you've received in the mail, walk through your neighborhood and try to identify the flowers and shrubs you see. On a rainy day, have the kids make an A, B, C book, drawing and naming each.



2. **IDENTIFY BIRDS:** Birdwatching can be very exciting and awe-inspiring. Take a walk, either with your kids or alone. Along the way, see if you can identify all the birds you see and hear. [Easy ways to get kids birding](#) is a good place to start.

Don't have a field guide app? Download [a handy Audubon Bird Guide App](#) to start learning about 821 North American species.

- Kids can have trouble looking through binoculars. Instead, focus on staying still and looking for the movements of birds and other animals. Or, for more fun, [make a pair of DIY cardboard binoculars](#) to get your child into practice.