

Composting is nature's way of recycling. Imagine... without it we'd be tripping over dinosaurs.

Middle School's Compost

www.mansfieldct.org/schools/mms/compost/index

9,000 lbs. of Food Waste

Please enjoy the bag of finished compost that was made at Mansfield Middle School. About 9,000 pounds of food waste is composted at the Middle School each year. Instead of being thrown in the trash, it is being converted into a very nutritious soil amendment for plants. Each day students, teachers and cafeteria staff sort their food scraps into a separate barrel. At the end of lunch, teachers and students place the food waste into the on-site compost bins and bury it in wood chips and leaves. Over the course of the school year, this food waste turns into this nutrient-rich humus.



Ways to Use Compost

Spread compost on your garden before rototilling or turning the soil in the spring. Use compost as a mulch (groundcover) for shrubs, trees, flowers and vegetables. When transplanting house plants or seedlings, add compost into the soil.

Liquid Fertilizer

Sink a clay pot into the ground near a plant at planting time. Put a handful of compost into the pot. Fill the pot with water each time you water the plant. The water in the pot will absorb nutrients and seep into the soil through the hole in the pot bottom.

How Compost Happens

Insects, fungi, bacteria and worms make compost by digesting organic material. By simply piling grass clippings and other yard trimmings, these critters create finished compost, but depending on the conditions it might take them a year or two, unless you help.

Start Your Own Pile

These are some simple ways you can help speed up the process by making conditions ideal for these micro-organisms:

1. Make a pile at least 3 feet high by 3 feet wide by 3 feet long. You can use a commercial bin, chicken wire, wood pallets or no enclosure at all.

2. Start by making the pieces small. Ice will melt faster if you break it into small pieces; the same is true with decomposing materials.

3. Feed your compost critters a "balanced diet" of roughly 1 part succulent "greens" (such as grass clippings, non-animal kitchen scraps, and barnyard manure) to 3 parts woodier "browns" (such as leaves, straw, hedge trimmings, sawdust, shredded paper or cardboard).

4. Maintain a balance of moisture and air. Compost critters need oxygen and water. Keep the pile evenly moist but not dripping wet, and aerate the pile by mixing it, or by turning it occasionally.

5. Your finished compost will be dark, crumbly, earthy-smelling and resemble rich soil.

Make compost tea by placing a burlap bag of compost in water. Steep for 3 or more days. Use the tea when watering plants for an extra boost of nutrients.

Tea Time