

Composting Information

Pest-proofing Your Compost Bin

Are there pests in your neighbourhood? You may not even be aware of any small critters like racoons, mice, rats, insects, etc., until you start to compost. Previously unnoticed pests may now be looking for a new source of food in your compost pile. The best solution is prevention. If you compost correctly your pile will be less attractive to pests. This Fact Sheet outlines some general tips and specific methods of protecting your compost bin.

Prevention Tips

1. Do not compost any meats, fish, bones, oils, fatty foods or pet manure. Animals will be attracted by the smell and the decomposition process will slow down as these materials take longer to break down.
2. Place materials that are high in carbon (e.g. dry leaves or dead plants) at the bottom of the pile and along the inside walls of your compost bin. This will provide good airflow, drainage and odour control. A well-managed bin will not attract as many pests.
3. Cover any exposed food with a layer of leaves or a one-inch layer of soil or bury food waste into the centre of the pile. This will reduce smells which may attract pests. The microorganisms in the soil will help to speed up the composting process.
4. Take measures to build a "hot" compost pile. This is an active compost pile in which the internal temperatures become very hot. Maintaining a "hot" pile takes some extra effort, but it is an effective way to ward off unwanted pests and you'll have finished compost in a shorter period of time.
5. Harvest finished compost at the bottom of the bin at least once a year. This will discourage some pests from nesting in the warm finished compost.
6. If possible, choose a location for your compost bin that has good drainage and at least partial sunlight. This will improve the efficiency of your pile. Try not to place your bin close to a food garden, fence or deck (if you have one). Animals may be attracted to the food in the garden and can gain easy access to the lid of your bin from a fence or deck.
7. Pests will be less likely to discover your compost if they are not already attracted by other sources. It's a good idea to put your plastic garbage bags into a container at the curb, or to not put out your garbage bags until the morning of collection.

... over

Kingston
221 Portsmouth Avenue
Kingston, ON K7M 1V5
Tel: 613-549-1232
1-800-267-7875
Fax: 613-549-7896

Cloyne
P.O. Box 59
14209 Highway 41
Cloyne, ON K0H 1K0
Tel: 613-336-8989
Fax: 613-336-0522

Napanee
41 Dundas Street
Napanee, ON
K7R 1Z5
Tel: 613-354-3357
Fax: 354-6267

Sharbot Lake
P.O. Box 149
1130 Elizabeth Street
Sharbot Lake, ON K0H 2P0
Tel: 613-279-2151
Fax: 613-279-3997

Flies

Large numbers of flies can be a nuisance around your compost bin. Cover the area of the pile that the flies are on, or any exposed food, with a one-inch layer of soil. Add more soil, if necessary. Add air to your compost pile by turning it or creating air channels by plunging a broomstick handle into the pile. Also keep the pile slightly damp so that it will heat up. The higher temperatures will kill any fly larvae. Compost piles made entirely from yard wastes (brush, leaves, twigs and dry grass) do not usually attract flies or other flying insects in large numbers.

Rodents and Other Small Animals

Pest-proofing your bin, as described below, will prevent any animal from tunnelling up through the bottom, or climbing into the bin from the sides or top.

1. Use heavy gauge half-inch or quarter-inch galvanized wire mesh or 16 to 20 gauge hardware cloth to line the bottom and outside walls of your bin.
2. Get a tight-fitting lid or modify your existing lid by adding hinges and a latch. Or stretch a bungy cord or chain across the lid and fasten it to the sides of the bin. A heavy brick or rock will also keep the lid secure.
3. Pile rocks or bricks around the outside bottom of your bin as a good temporary measure against some burrowing animals.

Animal Repellents

Environmentally safe animal repellents can be found in hardware or gardening stores.

Other Agencies

If rodent problems persist, or in the unlikely event that rodents are nesting in your bin, call your local public health department or authorized pest control company. If a small animal gets trapped in your bin, call your local animal control service or the Humane Society.

There are many ways to compost. You will need to find the method that works best for your. If outdoor composting proves too difficult, try composting indoors with worms. It's easy and produces great compost.

Source: Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto