

COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ HOME COMPOSTING PROGRAM

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COMPOST BINS



What type of bin is right for you?

Successful composting systems can take many different forms and can be purchased or homemade. In choosing the right composting system, you should consider the following questions:

- Will you be composting food scraps, yard trimmings, or both? If you include food scraps, you should use a rodent-resistant bin (no openings larger than 1/4"). Worm bins are good if you're composting only food scraps.
- What volume of composting materials will you be producing? For large volumes you may need more than one bin.
- Do you have a big or small space to keep your bin?
- Will you need more than one compost bin to simplify management of materials in different stages of decomposition?
- What is your budget? Homemade bins are cheap and they work just fine.

Types of compost bins

Worm Bins – Worm composting is unique because it uses food scraps only, and no yard waste. It is ideal for people with very small yards, or no yard. Plastic storage bins with holes drilled in the bottom and the sides are good for starting out. Homemade wood bins are easy to make. Manufactured bins with layers to help separate worms from compost work reasonably well and can be kept indoors but they are expensive.



Plastic worm bin

Heaps – This is the simplest composting method, but compost in a heap may take up more space than a bin. It is not recommended for food scraps as four-legged critters are likely to visit looking for a meal. To keep it from drying out in summer and getting too wet in winter, a heap or open pile should be covered.

Hoops – This type of bin is inexpensive and can be made from lengths of wire fencing or wooden pallets. Plastic hoop bins can be purchased. Hoops are enclosed and are tidier than a heap and can be moved and covered easily, but are generally not animal resistant. Easy to take apart and reassemble when turning or removing compost.



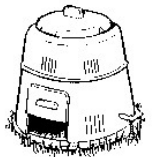
Hoop and heap

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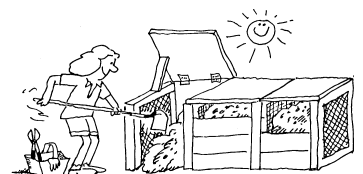
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One Bin System – A one-bin system can be square, circular, or cone shaped and can be commercial or homemade. Most commercial bins have lids and ventilation and are animal resistant. These bins are good for smaller yards where there is a small amount of material to be composted. Bins aid in moisture and heat retention. Many people prefer the neat appearance of enclosed bins. Although some have small doors near the base, turning the material and/or removing the compost typically requires lifting the bin up and over the material and reloading it.



Multi Bin System – This is a great system for a household or community space generating a significant amount of waste. Efficient, allowing you to have three working piles at different stages of decomposition. It is easy to turn and harvest. This style bin can be made animal resistant.

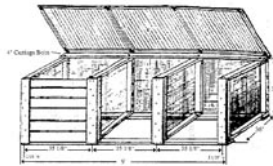


Tumbler or Spinner – These self-contained barrels, drums or balls rotate for easy mixing and fast decomposition. They are more expensive than other systems. Although most models are easy to turn, end-over-end models can be nearly impossible to turn and poorly balanced when full. Tumblers and spinners are suitable for small spaces and are usually animal resistant. Because they must be loaded in batches, you will either have to store fresh materials or use two tumblers. The material in one will be decomposing while the other is being loaded.

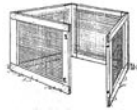
Make a bin

Instructions for building the following bins are available through the Rotline at (831) 423-4327 (HEAP) and at www.compostsantacruzcounty.org:

- Rotating barrel composter
- Wood and wire stationary three-bin system
- Portable wood and wire composting bin
- Homemade worm bins (plastic and wood)
- Pallet worm bin
- Homemade food scrap composter (garbage can)
- Compost screen



Three-bin system



Portable wood and wire bin

Recycled lumber

Capitola Salvage, 1575 38th Ave., Capitola, (831) 465-6990.

Castroville Salvage (Randazzo), 10900 Merritt St., Castroville, (831) 633-0369.

Pallets

Useful for making compost bins.

Lumbermen's locations:

- 235 River St., Santa Cruz, (831) 426-1020.
- 2435 41st Ave., Soquel, (831) 425-6100.
- 5843 Graham Hill Rd., Felton, (831) 335-4423.

Materials exchanges

Free services designed to help businesses and people find homes for materials they would otherwise discard. Great sources for free building materials.

Santa Cruz County Freecycle, www.groups.yahoo.com/group/SantaCruzCountyFreecycle/

California CALMAX, www.ciwmb.ca.gov/calmax.

Websites for bin builders

Ideas, instruction and plans for building a bin.

www.backyardgardener.com/compost.

www.knowledgehound.com/topics/compost.htm#bins.



Buy a bin

Local compost bin suppliers (prices subject to change)

The Garden Company, 2218 Mission St., Santa Cruz, (831) 429-8424, sells the Presto Hoop Bin, \$24.79.



Presto Hoop

Last Chance Mercantile, located at the Monterey Regional Waste Management District, 14201 Del Monte, Marina, (831) 384-5313, sells the following bins:

- Can-O-Worms worm bin, \$65.00.
- Presto Hoop Bin, \$9.50.
- Soilmaker, \$50.

Orchard Supply Hardware, 1601 Capitola Ave., Capitola, (831) 475-7701 and 1060 South Green Valley Rd., Watsonville, (831) 728-7701, sells the following bins:

- Garden Gourmet, \$70.
- Presto Hoop Bin, \$18.

Green Waste Recovery, 1340 West Beach St., Watsonville, (800) 665-2209, sells bins to customers. See page 2.



Garden Gourmet

Compost bins on-line and mail order

Visit the following websites to view a variety of composting bins, their features and prices. Catalogs available by request.

Green Culture, Lake Forest, California, (800) 233-8438, www.composters.com.

Harmony Farm Supply, Sebastapol, California, (707) 823-9125, www.harmonyfarm.com.

Gardeners Supply Company, Burlington, Vermont, (800) 863-1700, www.gardeners.com.

Clean Air Gardening, Dallas, Texas, (214) 370-0530, www.cleanairgardening.com.



Compost Demonstration Sites

The County sponsors four Compost Demonstration Sites. The purpose of these sites is to provide examples of the many different types of compost and worm bins available and to promote composting as a waste reduction tool for residents.

All sites include active residential-scale compost bins, worm bins, interpretive signs and free brochures.

Live Oak Grange Compost Demonstration Site

Located at the Live Oak Grange Demonstration Garden, 1900 17th Ave., Santa Cruz. Open every day, sunrise to sunset.

Includes three-bin system made of recycled pallets as well as a full range of manufactured and homemade compost bins and worm bins. Maintained by Santa Cruz County Master Composters.

Cabrillo College Botanic Gardens Compost Demonstration Site

Located at the Cabrillo College Environmental Horticulture Center Botanic Gardens, 6500 Soquel Drive, Aptos.

Open Monday through Saturday, 9am-5pm during fall and spring semesters. Summer and winter session (January) hours are less predictable. Generally closed on holidays.

The site features examples of several manufactured bins, including a CompostTumbler rotating barrel composter, a Biostack, an Earth Machine, a variety of homemade and manufactured worm bins and a large two-bin system which can be turned using a small tractor.

Maintained by County of Santa Cruz Master Composters and Cabrillo Horticulture staff and students.

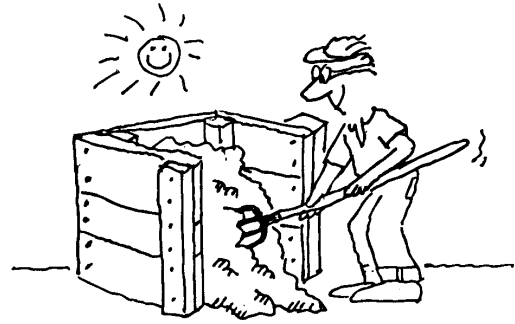
Directions: The Center is perched on 11 acres above the Cabrillo campus. Follow the Perimeter Road, turn up the hill towards the Center and park in the lot across from the 5000 building. From the parking lot, continue walking on the paved road that leads into the gated greenhouse propagation area. The Compost demonstration site is located at the end of the paved road on the right.

Grey Bears Compost Demonstration Site

Located at the Grey Bears Recycling Facility, 2710 Chanticleer, Santa Cruz. Open every day, 7am to 4pm.

Includes manufactured and homemade compost bins and worm bins. Maintained by Santa Cruz County Master Composters.

Directions: Once you've arrived at the Grey Bears Site, the demonstration site is on the north and west sides of the house that serves as the Grey Bears office. If you have trouble finding it, please ask the staff of the Recycling Center for directions.



The Rotzone: Life Lab Garden Classroom Compost Demonstration Site

Located at the UCSC Farm and Garden. Open every day, 8am to 6pm.

Includes three-bin system made of recycled plastic lumber as well as a full range of manufactured and homemade compost bins and worm bins. Maintained by Life Lab staff.

Directions: From Mission St. in Santa Cruz, going north, turn right on Bay St., follow until you get to UCSC's main entrance, continue up the hill to the Carriage House/Campus Facilities parking lot on the right and park. Cross the street and follow signs that say Agroecology/Farm/Pedestrians. Walk 350 yards on the gravel path to the gate on your left. Please be careful not to walk on the paved bike path. The demonstration site will be off to your left under a large avocado tree. To view a map with directions to the Life Lab Garden, visit www.lifelab.org/contact/map.pdf



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