WOOD PALLET COMPOSTER

Wood pallets can make inexpensive and durable compost bins (figure 1). Used pallets are often available from local businesses, manufacturers, or landfills. This bin can be used as a holding or turning unit. To use it as a turning unit, unhook the sides, set up the composter next to the existing pile, and then transfer the materials to the empty bin.

**Cost:** About $30

**Capacity:** Eight to ten 30-gallon bags of yard materials

**Degree of difficulty:** ✪ Little or no building skills needed

How to construct

**MATERIALS**

- Four wooden pallets (five if you want a bottom for the bin), sized to make a four-sided container at least 3 x 3 x 3’
- Eight large hook-and-eye gate latches (bolt latches, rope, or bailing wire are also options)
- Level
- Shovel
- Work gloves

**CONSTRUCTION DETAILS**

1. Level the ground where the pallet bin will sit.

2. Connect four pallets with hooks and eyes or bolt latches to make a four-sided bin at least 3 x 3 x 3’. (The pallets can also be tied or wired together.)

3. (Optional.) A fifth pallet may be used as a base to allow more air to get into the pile and to increase the bin’s stability. However, this base pallet will decompose faster than the sides and make it more difficult to turn the bottom of the pile.

**FIGURE 1.** Wood pallet composter

Home composting is an easy and inexpensive way to create a valuable soil amendment from yard and household waste. Composting means less waste going into the landfill and less need for chemical fertilizers.

While many people simply pile their compost in a heap, others may want to use a bin to contain their compost and speed up the composting process. Compost bins vary in size, use, and cost, whether you purchase a commercial product or build one yourself. This publication, from a series of do-it-yourself plans, provides you with all you need to know to build your very own compost bin.

For more information look under Resources at the end of this publication.
Now you are ready to start using your bin and begin composting! Simply mix one part green (nitrogen) materials with two parts brown (carbon) materials (table 1), keep the materials as damp as a wrung-out sponge, and use a small shovel, pitchfork, or garden fork to mix the contents from time to time.

**TABLE 1.** Materials for composting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brown materials (2 parts)</th>
<th>Green materials (1 part)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Dry leaves</td>
<td>• Green leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Twigs less than ¼” in diameter</td>
<td>• Grass clippings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shredded newspaper</td>
<td>• Weeds (before they have gone to seed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shredded household cardboard: egg cartons, paper towel, and toilet paper rolls</td>
<td>• Leftover plants at the end of the season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Coffee grounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fruit and vegetable scraps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Eggshells</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Do not compost:** Meat, bones, grease, whole eggs, dairy products, diseased or highly invasive plants, pet waste.

**Resources**

For more information on composting, including the Wisconsin Master Composter Program, contact:

**Solid & Hazardous Waste Education Center (SHWEC)**

www.uwex.edu/ces/shwec

Joe Van Rossum, Recycling Specialist

joseph.vanrossum@ces.uwex.edu

608-262-0385

**Composting to Reduce the Waste Stream (NRAES-43)**

Plants and Life Sciences Publishing (PALS), Cornell Cooperative Extension

http://palspublishing.cals.cornell.edu/nra_order.taf?_function=detail&pr_booknum=nraes-43

**Master Composter Resource Manual**

Cornell Waste Management Institute

cwmi.css.cornell.edu/mastercompostermanual.pdf

These publications are available from the Learning Store (learningstore.uwex.edu):

- Compost (A4021)
- Do-It-Yourself Compost Bins series
  - Barrel Composter (G4020-01)
  - Can Composter (G4020-02)
  - Concrete Block Composter (G4020-03)
  - Wire Mesh Composter (G4020-04)
  - Wood and Wire Composter (G4020-05)
  - Wood Pallet Composter (G4020-06)
  - Wood 3-Bin Composter (G4020-07)

---

Copyright © 2013 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System doing business as the division of Cooperative Extension of the University of Wisconsin-Extension. All rights reserved.

**Author:** Joe Van Rossum is Recycling Specialist and Director at the Solid & Hazardous Waste Education Center (SHWEC), UW-Extension. Cooperative Extension publications are subject to peer review.

**University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension**, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties, publishes this information to further the purpose of the May 8 and June 30, 1914, Acts of Congress. An EEO/AA employer, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements. If you have a disability and require this information in an alternative format, or if you would like to submit a copyright request, please contact Cooperative Extension Publishing at 432 N. Lake St., Rm. 227, Madison, WI 53706; pubs@uwex.edu; or (608) 263-2770 (711 for Relay).

**This publication is available** from your county UW-Extension office (www.uwex.edu/ces/cty) or from Cooperative Extension Publishing. To order, call toll-free 1-877-947-7827 or visit our website at learningstore.uwex.edu.

**Do-It-Yourself Compost Bins: Wood Pallet (G4020-06)**