

## The Compost Bin

When starting a compost project at home or work, the selection of a compost bin is an important decision. There are a large variety of bins to choose from, and your choice is up to you. However, there are other considerations, such as its location and size, which should be considered carefully before proceeding. Here are some tips to help your decisions.

### 1. Location of the Compost

In the province of Newfoundland and Labrador we often experience long winters, cool springs and cold, wet autumns. Therefore, to extend the compost season as long as possible, it is very important to position your bin in a sunny, sheltered spot. The warmer temperatures will encourage greater microbial activity, which will speed the compost process. A compost bin located in the shade will remain cool, lengthening the process.

While a sunny location is important, your bin should also be accessible and convenient to use. Many families keep a small waste collection bin near the kitchen door, and empty this once a week in the compost bin positioned further away. The choice is yours.

A well drained area is also essential. Many people find it more convenient to raise the bin slightly off the ground using pieces of wood or a pallet.

### 2. Size of the Compost

While the size of your bin is related to the amount of material you wish to compost, a popular compost bin size is approximately 30 inches (76 centimeters) wide by 30 inches deep by 30 inches high. When your compost bin is smaller, the pile does not tend to heat up or "cook" properly and a bigger pile may be harder for many people to manage.

However, if you plan to compost on a larger scale, you can adjust your bin size accordingly, or create more than one bin.

### 3. Type of Compost Containers

The type of container you use is a personal choice. It has been our experience at MUN Botanical Garden that the simplest model is usually the best choice. Depending on the location of your bin, you may decide on an attractive looking bin, or a purely functional one. Why not drop by the compost demonstration garden located outside the Friends' wildlife garden here at MUN Botanical Garden to get some ideas.

## To Purchase or Build?

Many ready-to-use models are available for purchase from hardware and garden centers. At times the large variety can be confusing. It is best to select a type that fits your budget, keeping in mind that a compost bin does not have to be expensive. As long as it is sturdy, the correct size, and has a lid that will stay put, it should work. Some plastic bins may not be rodent-proof. If rodents are a problem, simply lining your bin with chicken wire can do the trick. Here is a sample of some of the many types of composts that can be used:

### Converted Garbage Can

By simply puncturing holes in a metal or plastic garbage can, you can create a bin. You may want to cut out the bottom, add some wire mesh and raise it slightly off the ground using pieces of wood or a pallet.

### Wire-mesh Container

You can build a bin by simply tying together 3-4 feet of wire mesh into a circle. You may wish to secure it to the ground to ensure it doesn't tip over. The advantage of this model is the excellent air flow and affordable price.

### Wooden Pallet Container

This simple, cost-effective model also recycles wooden pallets, which are sometimes available for free from retail outlets. Simply position four pallets in an upright position, and tie together to form a square. You can add a pallet floor for stability.

### Compost Pile

While definitely not wind or rodent proof, the simple compost pile costs nothing, requires no set-up and works well. Because it is considered by some to be unattractive, it may be better situated in an out-of-the-way location. Ideally, it should be in a sheltered spot to prevent the wind from blowing it away. For aesthetics, you may wish to limit this type of composting to leaves, grass and other yard waste.

### Rotating Barrel

This type of bin can be purchased or made. It is rotated by simply turning a handle, making aeration and mixing an easy task. Education staff here at the Garden has noticed children (and adults) really enjoy using this composter.

