

Module 8 – Cold Composting



LSU AgCenter Home Composting Certificate Course

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Cold Composting is Nature's Process

As we said in the first composting module,

- Composting Happens
- Has been happening since long before humans got involved.

Cold Composting is Nature's Process

- Involves macro-organisms to complete the process.
 - Earthworms
 - Beetles
 - Fungi
 - Isopods
 - Termites
 - Cockroaches
 - And Many More



A sowbug (*Trachelipus rathkei*) at left and a pillbug (*Armadillidium vulgare*) on right with inset showing pillbug rolled up in defense posture.

Cold composting on site can have many benefits in the lawn and garden.

1. Grass clippings
2. Leaves
3. Mulch
4. Adding organic matter to soil



Many Composter Designs Made for Cold Composting



- Single bin systems that cannot be turned, moved or easily emptied.
 - Easiest way to turn a pile is to transfer the contents to another bin or empty or move the composter and refill.
- Designs with a door at the bottom



Let's Be Honest

Many of us start with the best intentions.

- We build a pile and it even may get to the thermophilic phase.

But


- Pile is neglected with infrequent if any aeration.

Cold Compost Can Still Be Used Outside the Vegetable Garden



- Ornamental Gardens
- Overtopping Lawns





Cold Compost Can Be Used in the Vegetable Garden With Some Exceptions

- Farmers growing vegetable for sale must comply with Food and Drug Administration and USDA guidelines concerning compost.
- Seeds and Diseased plant material and animal manures should not be added.

Cold Composting is a 2-step Process

1. Put your organic waste into a pile or container
 - If possible, follow the same guidelines from the previous lessons for selecting and preparing the material.

Cold Composting is a 2-step Process

2. Wait – may require a year or two to produce usable compost.
 - Length of time depends on what you put into your pile, composter design and the ambient conditions.
 - There is no reliable way to estimate how long the process will take.

Cold Composting Does Not Have to Take That Long

Piles or composters with open bottoms will allow access for the macro-organisms mentioned earlier.



Cold Composting Pros

- Requires very little management
- Continuous production of finished compost
- Need only one unit or pile



Cold Composting Cons

1. Does not kill weed seed or pathogens
2. No reliable method for predicting finish date
3. Must diligently keep out diseased material
4. Must diligently keep out mature plant seeds
5. Must be careful if manures are used
6. Does not meet USDA or Food and Drug Administration standards
7. Produces coarse compost



Please post all your questions and results to the message board .

