

## BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENER

Tip of the Week

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### Treasure at Our Feet-Composting

We walk on them every day in the Fall- grass and leaves. Separately they are wonderful, but together they are nature's food called compost. This season we have them both at once. Composting is Mother Nature's way recycling organic waste into useable nutrition for lawn, garden, trees, shrubs, and refreshing container plants.

Composting is easy, returns organic matter to the soil, helps loosen clay soil so roots grow better, the soil easier to work, adds to the water and essential nutrient retention capabilities of the sandy soil. It keeps over 15 million tons of organic waste from the landfills.

Everything from grass clippings, weeds, disease-free plant waste, kitchen scraps of vegetables and fruits, eggshells, and coffee and tea bags and filters is compostable. Don't use meat fats, cooking oils, or weed materials because they attract unwanted pests and adds to future weeding.

To make compost piles, choose a sunny level site convenient to the house and yard. Collect the leaves and grass from your yard and the already bagged material from neighbors. There's no set rule except to have carbon leaves and nitrogen grass and layer them adding house waste at will. Keep the pile moist, not wet, and allow a few weeks for the composting to begin. A hot pile is turned over each month using a pitch fork, while a cold pile is added to and compost is removed from the bottom of the pile as available without turning .

I take bagged leaves/grass and mow over them a time or two, rake them up and add to the pile or directly to the garden and let composting take place there for less work. Then I don't have to turn the pile or rake and I've composted and mulched in one step....efficient, huh?

When finished, compost smells earthy and sweet, breaks up easily in the hands and is rich and dark. Start now and by spring you add your compost to gardens and in weeks see the plants improve. Keep the pile churning and your yard rich and beautiful.

