

## Why Compost?

### IT'S GREAT FOR:

#### YOUR PLANTS!

Compost amends the soil and provides plants with nutrients.

#### THE ENVIRONMENT!

It's recycling like nature does. Composting decreases the amount of solid waste going into the landfills.

#### YOUR POCKETBOOK!

You'll save money on fertilizer & soil amendments.

This project is funded in part by a grant from the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council in cooperation with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.



## Composting/Recycling Days & Plant Sale November 15, 2008

### Thanks to Our Sponsors

Brownsville Herald  
Cameron County  
City of San Benito  
Coastal Current  
Harlingen Proud  
H.E.B.—San Benito  
Lower R.G.V. Development Council  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

Cameron County Master Gardener  
Association



The Master Gardener of Texas activities are coordinated by AgriLife Extension. Texas Master Gardener programs serve all people regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, or disability.



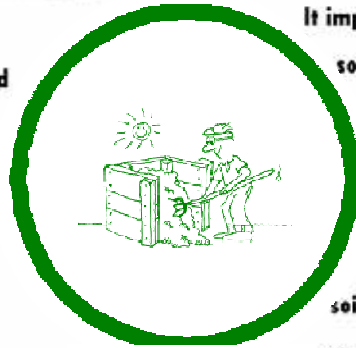
**Composting  
Recycling Yard  
and Food Waste**

Come learn about it at  
The Arboretum  
Located on  
the grounds of the  
Cameron County Annex  
on the corner of  
Williams Rd & Exp 77  
San Benito  
956-361-8236



## What is Compost?

Composting is nature's way of recycling. It forms when you mix things like leaves, grass clippings, vegetable and fruit scraps, and grounds, and the mixture decomposes. It can be used as a mulch or topdressing, or mixed into the soil. Compost adds vital nutrients to the soil.



*It's Compost Time!*

**BENEFITS:** Compost provides nutrients to your plants. It improves microbial activity that helps release soil nutrients for plant use. It reduces the need for costly chemical fertilizers. It improves soil structure and drainage, making tillage easier. Compost also increases the water holding capacity of your soil. It aerates soil, breaks up clay and binds sand. It prevents soil erosion and neutralizes toxins.

## Composting Basics

\* Composting works best when you combine the same amount (by weight) of "green materials" with "brown" materials. Vegetable and fruit scraps, green grass clippings, and manure are "green". Dead leaves, dry hay, wood shavings, and shredded paper are "brown".

\* The compost pile should remain moist throughout, but not soaked—like a wrung-out sponge.

\* Composting goes faster in a pile at least 3 feet high and 3 feet in diameter, with all materials broken into small pieces and well mixed.

\* You can tell a pile is quickly and actively composting because it will be warm to the touch. Temperatures 140 degrees Fahrenheit & higher can kill weed seeds and germs that cause disease. You can help your pile stay hot by putting it in a bin or covering it with a tarp.

## Avoid these Materials

\* **Meat, bones, fish, dairy products, grease, and oil;** they cause odors and attract pests.

\* **Pet droppings:** they harbor diseases.

\* **Weeds with seeds or runners;** you could wind up spreading them in your compost.

\* **Diseased or insect infested plants:** the diseases and pests could remain in your compost and spread.

\* **Shavings & sawdust from treated wood, and other materials containing preservatives or toxins.**

\* **Ashes:** they slow the composting process.



## BASIC COMPOST RECIPE

Ingredients:

**Brown Stuff (Carbon)**

**Green Stuff (Nitrogen)**

**Air**

**Water**

### Greens (Nitrogen)

Fruit & Veggie Scraps  
Grass clippings  
Coffee grounds  
Tea bags  
Plant trimmings  
Fresh leaves  
Sod

### Browns (Carbon)

Fall leaves  
Small Twigs  
Shredded Paper  
Hay  
Wood Shavings  
Nutshells  
Shredded junk mail

**Directions:** Put mixed yard trimmings in a bin or pile. Add water to lightly moisten. Mix in food scraps and other materials as generated.

**Cook:** 9-12 months (for faster compost, you can turn your pile every couple of weeks)

**Serve:** After the allotted time, most of the material at the bottom of the pile will be dark, rich sweet smelling soil. Serve this rich soil to your yard and garden.

For more information:

Visit the [Cameron County Master Gardener website](http://www.cameroncountymastergardeners.org)

[www.cameroncountymastergardeners.org](http://www.cameroncountymastergardeners.org)