

COMPOSTING IN BEAR COUNTRY

Teton County, Idaho



Backyard composting is the most effective and environmentally-friendly way to manage food scraps and other organic waste from your home. A well-maintained compost pile will not be an attractant provided you follow the guidelines below and eliminate other bear attractants in your yard.

#1 BE UNATTRACTIVE TO BEARS

Ensure that your yard does not provide easy food sources for bears

Bear attractants include:

- Smelly garbage
- Unrinsed recycling
- Dirty barbecue grills
- Livestock or beehives
- Fruit bearing trees and shrubs
- Bird Feeders
- Pet food
- Poorly maintained compost piles

#2 IT TAKES A VILLAGE!

Collaborate with your neighbors to implement preventative measures to reduce human-bear conflicts. Share information about eliminating bear attractants in your neighborhood.

#3 USE LOTS OF BROWN MATERIAL

Maintain a healthy compost bin to prevent odors that might attract wildlife. The key to a healthy compost bin is a good balance of **brown (carbon-rich) materials** and **green (nitrogen-rich) materials**. The **green (nitrogen) materials** provide the primary food for microorganisms, but need to be balanced with at least as much or more **brown (carbon) materials** to maximize breakdown and prevent odor (methane gas).

In bear country, browns should be used to cover every single addition of kitchen scraps completely covering it in a 1-4 inch deep layer. You will need to collect enough **“brown” material** in the fall to store next to your compost pile including fallen leaves, straw, shredded newspaper, or dried grass.

#4 ADD OXYGEN

Frequent aeration is necessary to encourage oxygen-loving aerobic bacteria in your compost pile, especially in the compressed bottom of the heap. Lack of oxygen can result in smelly anaerobic breakdown of food which is NOT acceptable in bear country. Aeration can be done with a tool to stir the bottom of the pile or by regularly “turning” your compost pile every few weeks. Be sure to cover it with a layer of “browns” after you have aerated.

#5 BURY FRUIT

Large volumes of fruit or other particularly odorous greens should be disposed of using “trench composting” which involves digging a hole or trench and burying the food under at least 12 inches of soil. This makes the odors from the decomposing fruit undetectable to bears.

Other Bear Safe Tips:

Did you know a simple electric fence can be a very effective deterrent to keep bears away from fruit trees, vegetable gardens, and beehives?

Make a habit of putting your trash can and recycling bins out on the morning of your collection rather than the night before to reduce your risk of attracting skunks, dogs, bears or other scavengers feeding on your waste while you sleep.

WHAT TO COMPOST:

Browns (Carbon)

Fallen leaves
Straw
Sawdust/wood chips
Newspaper (shredded)
Paper towels/napkins
Cardboard (shredded)
Dried grass or vegetation
Coffee Filters
Floor sweepings

Greens (Nitrogen)

Fresh grass clippings
Plant trimmings
Fruit and vegetable scraps
Coffee grounds
Tea bags
Manure
Weeds (compost noxious weed at the Transfer Station)
Eggshells

Do Not Compost: Meat

Fish
Bones
Dairy products
Grease or oils
Charcoal briquettes
Dog or cat feces (for health reasons)
Dryer lint (microplastics)



tetonrecycling.org

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Be sure to check out our other recycling and waste reduction programs