



Composting 101

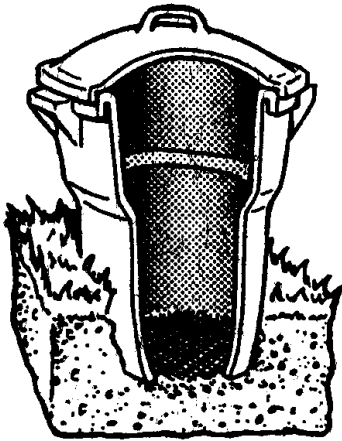
Closed Air Composting

Closed-air composting is usually done in solid plastic containers, with tight-fitting lids, and open bottoms. It can also be accomplished by covering a compost pile with heavy black plastic and sealing it around the perimeter with bricks or stones.

There are several models of closed-air bins on the market, and homemade systems can be constructed from old barrels. In addition to completely closed systems, there are also semi-closed systems available, which have snug fitting plastic lids, yet allow some air circulation. As with open-air composting, it is helpful to have two bins, so one can be curing while the other is in use.

Following are some of the features to keep in mind with closed-air systems:

- ♦ *Volume*
- ♦ *Ventilation*
- ♦ *Rodent Resistance*
- ♦ *Construction*



Volume

Although not as critical as with open-air systems, a large volume is functional. If used barrels are employed, look for those with 55 gallon capacity or greater.

Ventilation

Only semi-closed systems will have any air filters for ventilation.

Rodent-Resistance

A solid plastic bin, with a tight-fitting lid will go a long way towards discouraging rodents. However, a hungry rodent could easily burrow under and into the bin. To help prevent this, line the bottom of the bin

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with ¼-inch wire mesh, or with paving stones, cement pieces, or bricks. Keep in mind however, that these precautions only make the bin rodent-resistant, not rodent-proof. Persistent rodents have even been known to chew through metal compost bins.

Construction

Homemade bins can be made from plastic trash cans, or old shipping barrels. Keep in mind that the best place to locate a closed-air system is in the sun, so the bin will be subject to regular sun exposure. The thin plastic of most trash cans will weather quickly in the sun. Used shipping barrels, which are made of thicker plastic, are often available from hardware stores. If a plastic tarp is used, look for one which is thick and black. Commercial closed-air bins are usually made from thick plastic which has a special photo-inhibitor in the plastic. If purchasing a bin, be sure to look for one made from recycled plastic.