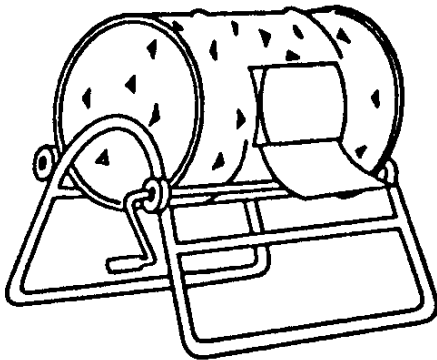




Composting 101

Compost Tumblers

More expensive than most compost containers, tumblers are available in a variety of shapes and sizes from many retailers. The advantages are the quick turnaround and the amount of effort. Once loaded, a tumbler will produce usable compost in as little as two weeks. All you have to do is turn the tumbler by handcrank once a day. Most are easy to assemble and are designed for ease of turning even when full. The barrels are usually made of plastic or aluminum and are suspended in a metal frame.



While styles vary, most tumblers have a hinged door of some sort, holes for aeration, a drain hole, a locking device to keep it in position for loading, and a crank system. Some heavy designs allow rain to get in and slow the composting process, but draping a large sheet of plastic over the drum or placing it in a protected area (*in a garage, under a tree*) will help alleviate this. Because daily rotating is required with tumblers, composting with one cannot be a passive activity. In fact, there are "recipes" for good compost mixes to insure that the tumbler will produce a quality product. Some tumbler users recommend leaving a bit of the finished compost as a "starter" for the new batch, much like a sourdough starter.



Whether you purchase a tumbler (*prices vary from \$100 to \$400*) or improvise one of your own, the quality and turnaround of your compost will be determined by the design. Compost tumblers are a reasonable choice for gardeners who want a steady, but modest, amount of compost throughout the year.

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