

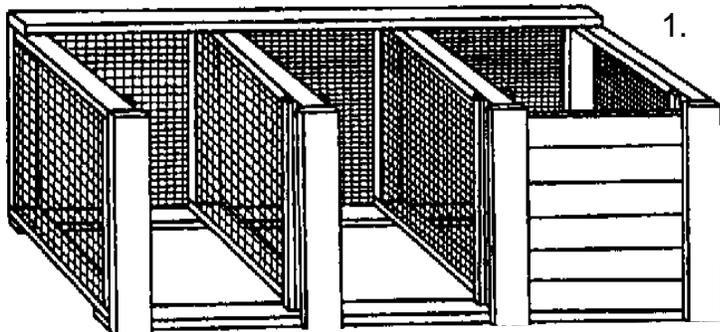


# Composting 101

## Three Bin System

One of the fastest methods of backyard composting is the three bin composting system (see illustration below). It is designed for easy management of the compost so that decomposition can proceed as fast as possible. The three-bin system is relatively expensive to build (\$100 to \$200), but it is durable and one of the more attractive and effective composting systems.

### Construction



1. Cut two 31½-inch and two 36-inch pieces from each 12-foot 2x4. Butt-end nail four pieces into a 34½-inch x 36-inch "square" (see Figures 2 and 3 on next page). Repeat for the other three sections.
2. Cut four 37-inch sections of hardware cloth; bend edges back 1 inch. Stretch the hardware cloth across each frame. Check for squareness of the frame and staple screen tightly into place every 4 inches around the frame. These are the end pieces and dividers of the compost unit.

### MATERIALS

#### BIN

- 2 18-foot pressure-treated 2x4s.
- 4 12-foot of 8 6-foot pressure-treated 2x4s.
- 1 16-foot cedar 2x6.
- 9 6-foot cedar 1x6s.
- 22 feet of 36-inch wide 1/2-inch hardware cloth.
- 12 1/2-inch carriage bolts, 4-inches long.
- 12 washers and 12 nuts for bolts.
- 3 pounds of 16-penny galvanized nails.
- 250 poultry wire staples or power stapler with 1-inch staples.
- **Tools:** Hand saw or circular power saw, drill with 1/2-inch and 1/8-inch bits, screwdriver, hammer, tin snips, tape measure, pencil, 3/4-inch socket or open-ended wrench, carpenter's square, 1-inch long galvanized staples, and eye and ear protection.

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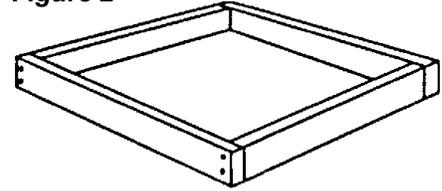
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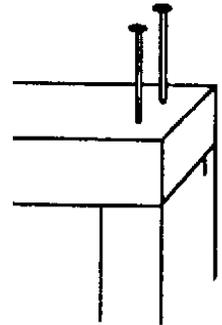
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3. Set up dividers parallel to one another three feet apart. Measure and mark centers for the two inside dividers. Cut four 9-foot pieces out of the two 18-foot 2x4s. Place two 9-foot base boards on top of the dividers and measure the positions for the two inside dividers. Mark a center line for each divider on the 9-foot 2x4. With each divider, line up the center lines and make the base board flush against the outer edge of the divider. Drill a ½-inch hole through each junction centered 1-inch in from the inside edge. Secure base boards with carriage bolts, but do not tighten yet.
4. Turn the compost unit right side up and repeat the process for the top 9-foot board. Using the carpenter's square or measuring between opposite corners, make sure the bin is square and tighten all bolts securely. Fasten a 9-foot-long piece of hardware cloth securely to the back side of the unit with staples every 4 inches around the frame.
5. Cut four 36-inch-long 2x6s for front slat runners. Rip cut two of these boards to 4½ inches wide and nail them securely to the front of the outside dividers and baseboard, making them flush on top and outside edges. Save remainder of rip cut boards for use as back runners. Center the remaining full-width boards on the front of the inside dividers flush with the top edge, and nail securely (see *Figure 4*).
6. To create back runners, cut the remaining 2x6 into a 34-inch long piece and then rip cut into four equal pieces, 1¼ inches x 2 inches. Nail the back runner parallel to front runners on side of divider leaving a 1-inch gap for slats (*Figure 4*). Cut all the 1x6 cedar boards into slats 31¼-inches long.

*Figure 2*



*Figure 3*



*Figure 4*

