

Earth-Friendly Gardening & Landscaping

The GreenMan



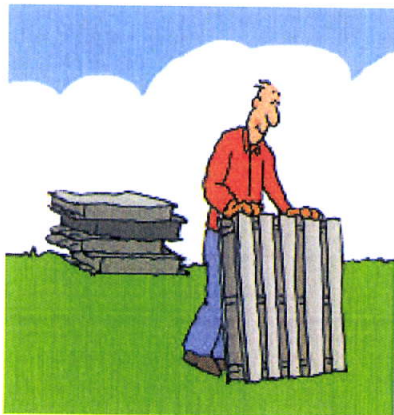
Composting with Pallets

Wooden shipping pallets are easily recycled into large, heavy-duty compost bins. Pallets are available for free from many area businesses, assemble in minutes, and with them you can produce humus-rich mulch and compost year after year. Here's how!

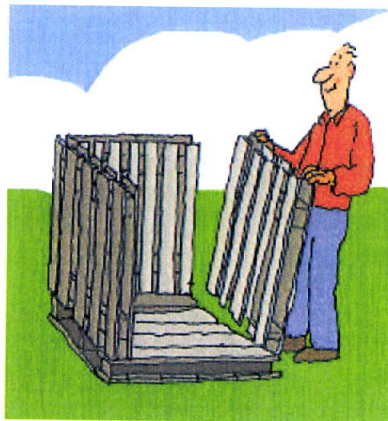
Assembly Instructions

Simple Pallet Bin

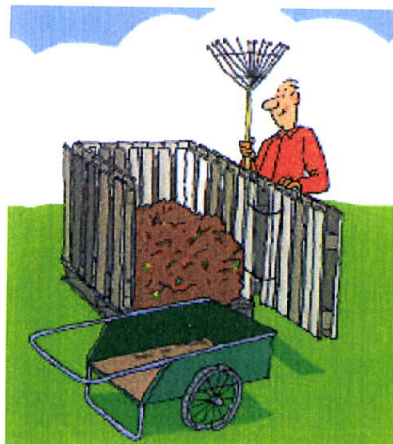
Obtain five pallets with narrow spaces between slats (1/2" - 1") and of uniform size. Many pallets measure 40" by 48" and will form a 48 cubic foot capacity bin. Pick up pallets from loading docks, freight companies, hardware stores, central post offices, print shops, wholesalers, nurseries and garden centers. There are always plenty around for free.



Place one pallet (slat-side up) on level ground. This pallet is the bottom of your bin and will allow for good drainage and aeration by keeping yard trimmings above the ground. Properly drained and aerated compost decomposes quickly and without odors.



Arrange the remaining pallets upright around each side of the base to form a box, short (40") sides up. Use spare wire, coathangers, or nylon rope to fasten the pallets together. Join pallets at each corner, lashing both the top and bottom. You can gain access to your compost pile by unfastening one side of a pallet and swinging it out like a hinged door.



Multi-Bin Units

Large properties and institutions like schools and churches may require a larger compost bin system to accommodate their materials. In addition, gardeners looking for quick compost may prefer a multi-bin system to make turning materials easier.

First, construct a single bin as described above. Then expand your compost system by setting another pallet to the right of the base of your existing bin, and adjoining it. Form another box with three additional pallets to form the door and sides of the new bin. The two bins will share one side. Additional "bins" can be added-on using just four pallets at a time.

Two-bin systems allow easy turning of materials by transferring decomposing trimmings from one side to the other. Three-bin systems are favored by aggressive composters, with one bin used for newer materials, which are "turned" or transferred into the second bin after several weeks (or months), and later into the final "curing" bin for several weeks or months, prior to use. Churches and schools frequently construct three, four, or more bin systems to handle materials.

Lifespan and Maintenance

Pallet bin sides generally last from four to six years, depending on the level of active use. Bases last one to two years and need to be replaced. Just drop another fresh pallet over the old base after removing any compost still in the bin — keep the new base as level as possible. The decomposing pallet will eventually turn to compost. Check corner lashing periodically and replace every several years, or as needed.