

How to Restart Your Compost

Turning your dormant winter compost into an active spring compost pile.

When NOT to Restart Your Compost

Mixing a pile in Winter displaces heat, causing it to cool.

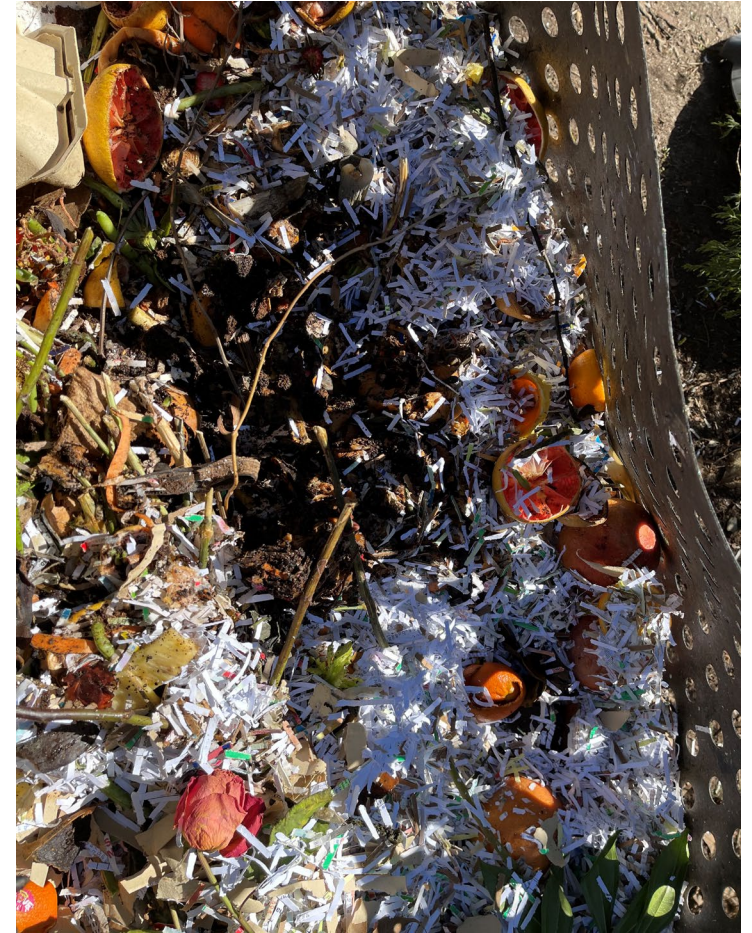
Only turn it if your pile becomes slimy and stinky.

Add brown material and turn the pile gently.

If frozen and snow covered, leave compost alone. Wait for warmer weather.



Feel material on inside of pile. No heat??? Your compost has become inactive.



Restarting an Inactive Pile

Two Options

Remove all material from bin before adding it back.

If you have 2 bins, move material from 1st into 2nd bin.

Turn well to mix. Adding dry/wet material as needed.



How to Restart Your Compost

Turn recently added materials, mix well with older parts of pile.

Encourages decomposition and regenerates heating.

Make pile bigger by adding more material.



Compost piles require enough organic material to maintain microbial activity.

Restarting a Wet Pile

Unpleasant “rotten egg” odor indicates pile has become anaerobic due to poor aeration.

Add dry material such as leaves if loose and well-shredded.

Cover the pile with a tarp or lid during periods of heavy rain.

Turn the pile thoroughly with a pitchfork to introduce oxygen to materials.



Break up big chunks of wet, compacted material and re-layer pile.



Restarting a Dry Pile

If it falls apart in your hand, it is too dry.

Turn pile to incorporate water and green materials.

Cover with a tarp or lid to help maintain moisture in the pile.

Cold, dry winters can desiccate compost.



Add water and/or green materials. Cover with tarp.



Signs of Life

Even a seemingly inactive pile may teem with life.

Microbial and macro-organism activity continues slowly at low temps.

Reactivating a compost pile will increase this activity.

(Bacteria, fungi, actinomycetes, worms and other insects.)

As you turn pile you will find worms and other insects.



Put any escapees back in the bin to finish their work.



Finish Rebuilding Your Pile

Fill compost bin to the top.

Make the last layer brown material.

Insert compost thermometer.

If done correctly pile should start to heat up in 1 – 2 days.



Finished Compost

This is not a depression in the ground.

This is a pile of dark, rich, finished compost from the bottom of the bin.

Even a poorly maintained pile can produce compost.



Compost Start Over

If the right conditions are met:

Size/location

C:N ratio

Moisture

Aeration

Size/surface

Time.

The compost will heat up and decomposition will accelerate.

4 days later the compost is now registering 110 degrees on a 40 degree day.



The pile is reduced in size as the materials heat up and start to decompose faster.

