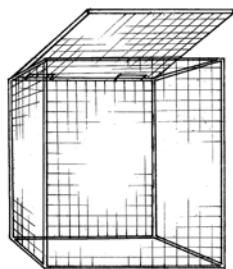# COMPOST CAGE

Materials needed...

Nitrogen material
- Food scraps
- Leaves
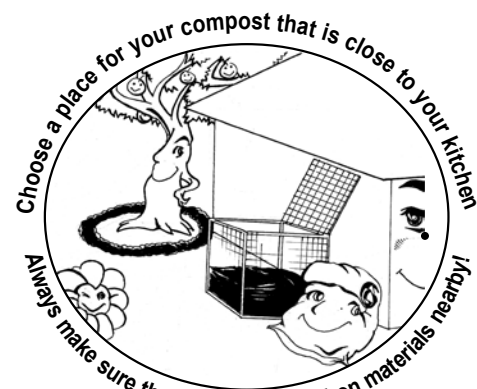
A closed container
such as the "compost cage" shown here
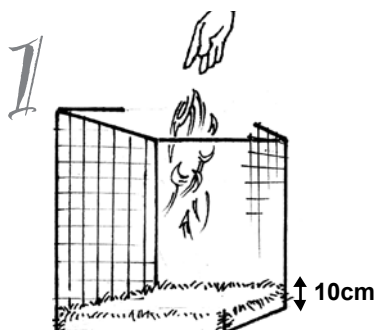
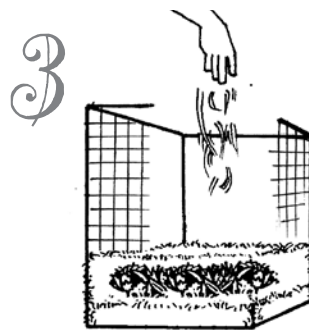**Carbon material**
- Sawdust
- Rice husks
- Dry leaves

Choose a place for your compost that is close to your kitchen. Always make sure there are lots of carbon materials nearby!

What you do...

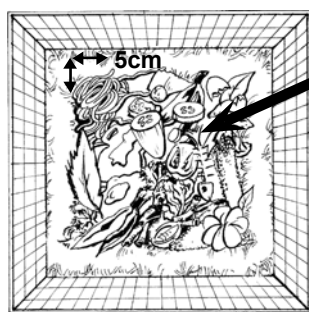**1** Line the base of your compost cage with about 10cm of carbon material.

10cm

2 Throw some food scraps (nitrogen) on top – make sure they fall in the center.

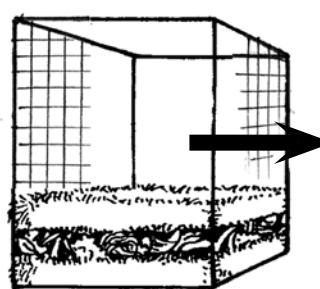**3** Add more carbon material, enough to cover all the food scraps.

4 Repeat this process until the compost cage is full.

5cm

5cm from the edge

REMEMBER!

1. Make sure the food scraps don't fall on the edge of the cage – have a 5cm border of carbon materials all around the edges.
2. Keep your food scraps and carbon ratios even.

Don't let the compost touch the edge!

Over time the compost will settle and become smaller.

Once the compost cage is full, lift the cage and move it to another location.

The compost is ready to use when it is black and crumbly.

IDEP

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More information:
www.idepfoundation.org

Troubleshooting compost problems

The compost is only damp and warm in the middle of the pile

Probable cause
The compost pile is too small, or cold weather may have slowed down the composting process.

Suggested solution
If you are only composting in piles, make sure your pile is at least 1m high and 1m wide. With a composting cage or triangle composting system, the pile doesn't need to be as large.

Nothing is happening, the compost pile doesn't seem to be heating up at all

Probable cause

1. Not enough nitrogen material.
2. Not enough oxygen getting to compost.
3. Not enough moisture in compost pile.
4. The compost is done and ready to use.

Suggested solution

1. Make sure you have enough nitrogen rich sources, like manure, grass clippings or food scraps.
2. Mix up the pile so it can breathe, or switch to compost cage or triangle system.
3. Mix up the pile and water it with the hose so that there is more moisture in the pile – a completely dry pile won't compost.

Leaves/clippings are not decomposing

Probable cause
Not enough aeration, and/or lack of moisture.

Suggested solution

1. Avoid thick layers of only one type of material. Too much of one material, like leaves, paper or grass clippings, won't break down well.
2. Break up the layers and mix up the pile so that there is a good mix of materials.
3. Shred any large materials into small pieces to make sure they break down well.

The compost smells like rancid butter, vinegar or rotten eggs

Probable cause
Not enough oxygen, and/or the compost pile is too wet or compacted.

Suggested solution

1. Mix up the pile so that it gets some aeration, or use a compost cage or triangle system.
2. Add coarse dry materials like straw, hay or leaves to soak up excess moisture.
3. If the smell is too bad, add dry materials on top and wait until it dries out before you mix the pile.

The compost smells like ammonia

Probable cause
Not enough carbon materials in the compost.

Suggested solution
Add more brown carbon materials, like sawdust, rice husks, leaves, straw, hay, shredded newspaper, etc.

The compost is attracting rodents, flies, or other animals

Probable cause
Inappropriate materials (meat, oil), or the food-like materials are too close to the surface or sides of the compost pile.

Suggested solution
Bury food scraps near the center of the pile. Don't add inappropriate materials (bones, meat) to your compost. Switch to a compost cage.

The compost is attracting insects, millipedes, and slugs

Probable cause
This is normal and part of the natural process.

The compost is attracting fire ants

Probable cause
The compost could be too dry, not hot enough, and/or has food scraps too close to the surface.

Suggested solution
Make sure your pile has a good mix of materials to heat up, and is kept moist enough.