

## Winter Composting Tips

Just because it's winter, it doesn't mean we have to stop composting. You can continue to build a pile you've already started or store your food scrap in buckets outside. Compost needs both green items and brown items in order to work. In the winter you will have mainly food waste for green items and brown items will be harder to find.

**BE PREPARED:** Have "dry browns" such as leaves, twigs, and dead plants from the garden on hand in either a separate container or in bags you can easily get to. If you have a compost bin, you can insulate your bin with these items. If you have a pile, when frost sets in, pile 12 inches or more of dry browns on top of your pile, leaving a hole in the middle for your food scraps. Each time you put in food scraps, cover them with two to three inches of browns.

**BE LAZY:** Don't turn the pile when it's really cold outside. Turning lets all that valuable heat out that the fungus and bacteria need to survive. Also, watering your pile in the winter is unnecessary since it is mostly inactive. Finally, make sure your pile is close to the house because you will have to trudge through snow to get to it.

**THINK SMALL:** Consider cutting up materials more in the winter so they break down faster and take up less space in the bin. The natural freeze and thaw action will break the materials up somewhat but the smaller the better.

**COVER IT UP:** If you have a bin, keep the lid on. If you have a pile, make sure you cover your food waste with at least 2 to 3 inches of browns so you don't attract neighborhood critters. You can also throw a tarp or large piece of cardboard over your pile.

You can also store your food waste in containers with a tight closure, such as five gallon buckets. Store this where it is readily reachable in an unheated area. In case we have a warm winter, consider putting sawdust in the bottom to absorb liquids and sawdust or compost on top. You should have an immature compost pile or stock of browns available to build a new pile when warmer weather returns.

Whatever option you choose, you will have a jump start on spring composting. For more information on composting, call the Rusk County Recycling Department at 715-532-2167.

