GARDENER'S SUPPLY COMPANY

Wire Bin Composter

Assembly Instructions

1. To form a square bin, you will be connecting the four panels using the Spiral Connectors provided. Start by placing the first Spiral at the top corner where two panels meet (Fig. 1). Twist the end of the Spiral around the two vertical wires and continue twisting it down about 1/3 the length of the wires.

2. Flip the panels and twist a second Spiral onto the bottom of the same corner.

3. Continue to connect the remaining 3 corners using the Spiral Connectors. When finished, you will have used a total of eight Spirals, two per corner.

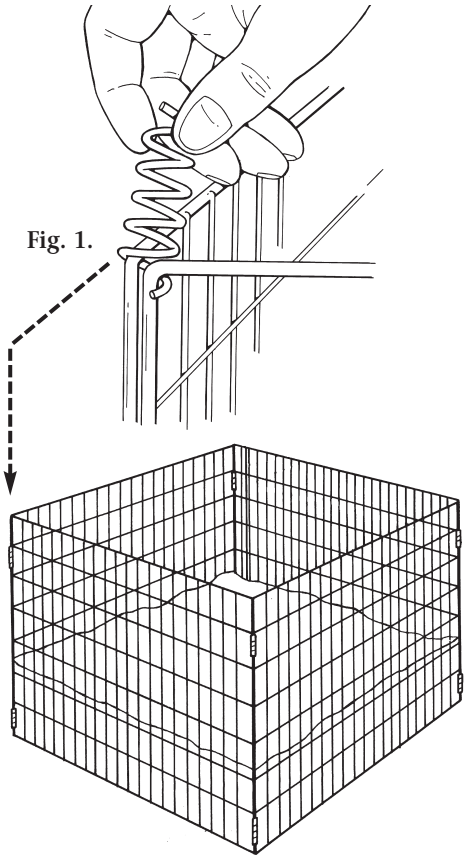

Fig. 1.

A single Wire Bin Composter holds up to 20 cubic feet of materials. By connecting 2 or 3 Wire Bins, you can have one bin to collect waste, one for cooking compost, and one for finished compost or for leaves (Fig. 2).

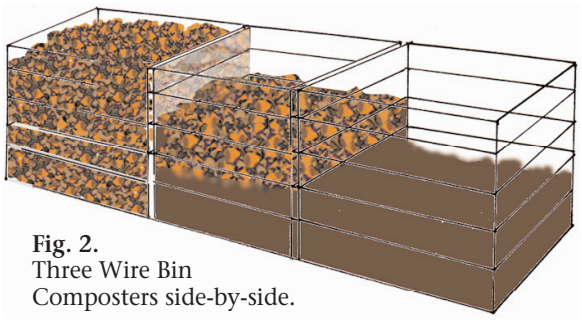

Fig. 2.
Three Wire Bin Composters side-by-side.

How Compost Happens

Organic matter is transformed into compost through the work of microorganisms, soil fauna, enzymes and fungi. With the right materials, the decomposition process can work very rapidly, sometimes in as little as 3 to 4 weeks! It all depends on the compost materials and kind of environment you provide for the decomposers to do their work.

Even if you don't provide the optimum environment, decomposition will still happen. Because the Wire Bin Composter is a continuous composter, you can continue to add materials to the top of the pile. With periodic turning and aerating, you should be able to remove finished compost after several months.

If you would like to make an abundance of compost in a short amount of time, the trick is to balance the following four things:

Carbon: Carbon-rich materials are the energy food for microorganisms. You can identify high-carbon plant materials because they are dry, tough, or fibrous, and tan or brown in color. Examples are dry leaves, straw, rotted hay, sawdust, shredded paper, and cornstalks.

Nitrogen: High-nitrogen materials provide the protein-rich components that microorganisms require to grow and multiply. Freshly pulled weeds, fresh grass clippings, over-ripe fruits and vegetables, kitchen scraps and other moist green matter are the sorts of nitrogen-rich materials you'll probably have on hand. Other high-protein organic matter includes kelp meal, seaweed, manure and bone meal.

Water: Moisture is very important for the composting process. But too much moisture will drown the microorganisms, and too little will dehydrate them.

A general rule of thumb is to keep the material in your compost pile as moist as a well-wrung sponge. If you need to add water, insert your garden hose into the middle of the pile in several places, or sprinkle the pile with water as needed. Covering the pile with a tarp will make it easier to maintain the right moisture level.

Oxygen: To do their work most efficiently, microorganisms require a lot of oxygen. When your first compost pile is assembled, there will probably be plenty of air between the layers of materials. But as the microorganisms begin to work, they will start consuming oxygen. Unless you turn or in some way aerate your compost pile, they will run out of oxygen and become sluggish. This will slow down the decomposition.

Batch Composting

If you have been collecting organic materials and want to make a batch of compost, you can do this by filling the

composter all at once. To make a batch, layer 4 to 6 inches of dry, shredded leaves, small twigs, garden trimmings and/or straw in the bottom. If you are using one of our compost activators, add it now. (See *Ordering Information*.)

Then add a 2- to 3-inch layer of grass clippings, kitchen scraps and other nitrogen-rich materials. Sprinkle lightly with water. The moisture content is very important. Add water sparingly until the moisture content is similar to a well-wrung sponge. Repeat the steps, layering the materials until the composter has been filled.

Checking the Process

After 2 or 3 days, check the internal temperature of the center of your mix with a compost thermometer or by touch. Temperatures between 120 to 160 degrees F indicate the beneficial organisms are multiplying and doing their job decomposing materials.

Use a garden fork or a compost aerator to mix the materials every two or three days and keep the process active. Periodically squeeze a handful of compost to see if it feels like a damp sponge. If it does, the moisture level is fine. If it feels dry, add a little more water. Be careful not to add too much water.

As the batch cools, continue to aerate the compost every day or two. Depending on the material you added, the compost should be ready in 6 to 8 weeks.

Finished compost will contain fine and coarse material. For a fine texture to be used in potting mixes, the compost can be sifted. Use the coarser compost as a nutritious top-dressing around outdoor plantings or till directly into your garden! You may also use finished compost as a starter for your next batch.

Composting Tips

• Check the moisture level, keeping the batch damp, not soggy.

• Use a garden fork or compost aerator to mix and fluff the compost every few days after the batch heats up. Composting requires oxygen, so make sure to mix it well.

• During fall and winter, the composting process may slow down or stop entirely until spring. To start it up again, add a compost activator and some leaves, food scraps and grass clippings. Mix well to incorporate air and add water to moisten the materials if necessary.

• Do NOT add meats, pet waste, fats, bones, fish, dairy products, trash or plastic to the composter. These do not break down easily and can attract unwanted pests to your compost.