

Deluxe Pyramid Composter

Smelly compost: If your pile smells like ammonia, it may contain too much nitrogen. Add carbon materials such as straw, leaves, or hay to correct the balance.

Soggy compost: Dense or water-logged compost piles don't contain enough oxygen for the microorganisms to survive. Often these piles give off an unpleasant odor. The solution is to aerate the pile and add more dry materials.

Finished compost too rough: Some materials like eggshells and corncobs take a very long time to break down. If you want a more finely textured compost, shred or chop up the materials before putting them into the bin. You can also sift out these larger particles and throw them into the next pile.

Hot compost: Heat is a by-product of intense microbial activity. It indicates that the microorganisms are munching on organic matter and converting it into finished compost.

Getting your compost pile "hot" (140 to 160 degrees F) is not critical, but it does mean that your compost will be finished more quickly. These high temperatures also kill most weed seeds, as well as harmful pathogens that can cause disease problems.

Most people don't bother charting the temperature curve in their compost pile. They just try to get a good ratio of carbon to nitrogen, keep the pile moist and well aerated, and wait until everything looks pretty well broken down.

Ordering Information

#34-642.....Deluxe Pyramid Composter, black
 #38-682.....Deluxe Pyramid Composter, brown
 #34-051.....Rodent Screen
 #32-669Extra Tall Earth Staples
 #38-189..... Super Hot Compost Starter
 #33-367..... Compost Aerator

To place an order, please call us or visit our web site for current prices.

Phone Orders: 1-800-427-3363 Customer Service: 1-800-876-5520
 E-mail: info@gardeners.com Web: www.gardeners.com

The Pyramid Composter comes with our innovative rain-catching lid, designed to keep compost moist, while letting excess water run off. Side vents ensure good aeration, and a sliding door in the front and back provide easy access to finished compost.

Assembly Instructions

The composter includes the following:

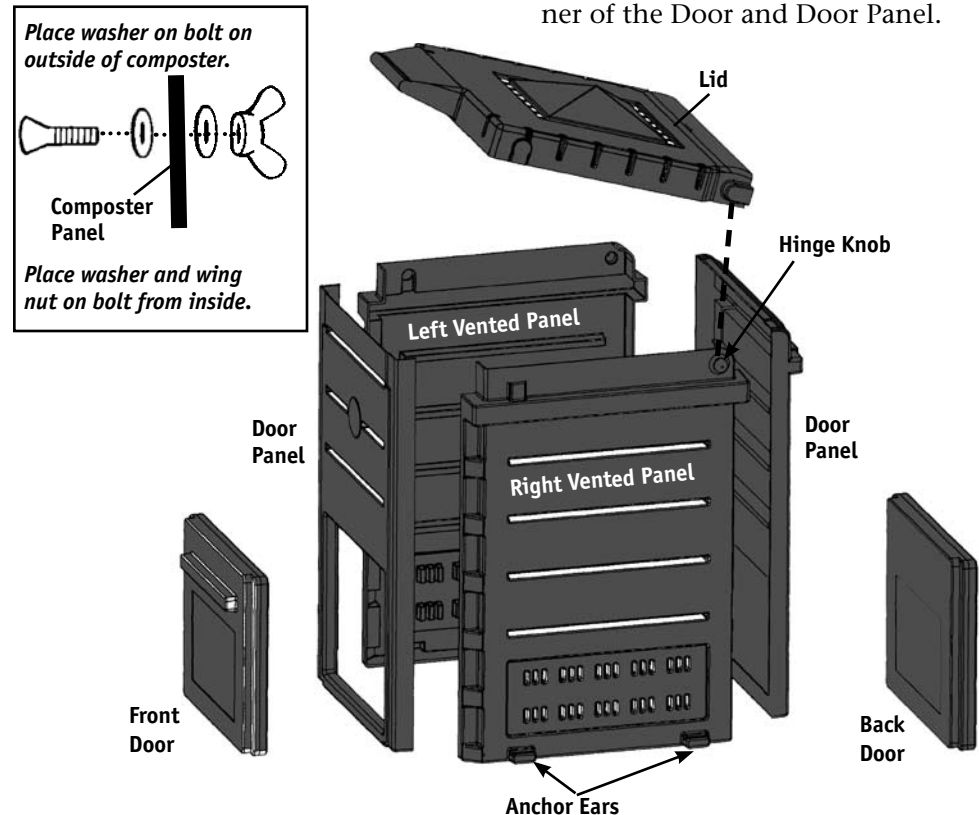
1 Lid, 1 Right Side Panel, 1 Left Side Panel, 2 Door Panels, 2 Doors, 12 bolts, 24 washers, 12 wing nuts.

Tools needed: Pliers may be helpful.

Important: Allow the composter parts to warm to room temperature to allow for greater flexibility in the plastic before assembly. A second person is needed to help hold the panels upright during assembly.

Step 1. Place a Door Panel upright on the ground, then place a Door directly up against the opening in the Panel.

Step 2. Position a Vented Panel upright (with the Hinge Knob toward the back) and next to the Door Panel. Wrap the corner of the Vented Panel around the corner of the Door and Door Panel.



Step 3. Line up the three predrilled holes along the corner where the two Panels meet. Place a bolt with a washer through each hole from the outside and a washer and wing nut on each bolt from the inside and partially tighten, using pliers if needed.

Step 4. Repeat Steps 1 through 3 to attach the second Vented Panel to the other side of the Door Panel (with the Hinge Knob toward the back).

Step 5. Repeat Steps 1 through 3 to attach the second Door Panel and Door to the Vented Panels. You will need to firmly press together the walls to line up some of the predrilled holes. You may flip the composter upside down if the two bottom holes are too deep to reach inside to install the hardware.

Step 6. Now tighten all bolts around all sides of the composter; however, do not over-tighten, to avoid damage to the wall of the composter.

Step 7. Turn the composter upright and look to make sure there are no gaps between the Panels. This will ensure that the Doors stay open when raised. Make sure the Doors slide freely up and down between the panels.

Step 8. To attach the Lid, push the Hinge Shoulders of the Lid onto the smaller Hinge Knobs at the back of the composter. Close the lid. Congratulations! The assembly is complete and the composter is ready to use.

Anchoring the Composter

You can anchor the composter to the ground using the Anchor “Ears” molded into the bottom of each Side Panel (see front page diagram).

If you live in a high wind area or simply want the extra security of an anchored composter, we recommend using Our Extra Tall Earth Staples (See Ordering Info.).

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 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 Pyramid Composter is a continuous composter, you can continue to add materials to the top of the pile and remove dark, nutrient-rich compost below, but it may take 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. Keeping the cover on 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.

Do I Need a Recipe?

Microorganisms and other soil fauna work most efficiently when the ratio of carbon-rich to nitrogen-rich materials in your compost pile is approximately 25:1. In practical terms, if you want to have an active compost pile, you should include lots of high-carbon “brown” materials (such as straw, wood chips, or dry leaves) and a lesser amount of high-nitrogen “green” materials (such as grass clippings, freshly pulled weeds, or kitchen scraps).

If your pile has too much nitrogen and not enough carbon, the pile will also decompose very slowly and it will probably be soggy and smelly along the way. But don’t worry about the exact carbon content of a material or achieving a precise 25:1 ratio. Composting doesn’t need to be an exact science. All organic matter breaks down eventually, no matter what you do. If you simply use about 3 times as much “brown” materials as “green” materials, you’ll be off to a great start.

Composting Tips

* Keep a pile of straw, dry leaves, or peat moss near your compost pile. Sprinkle a little on the top of the pile each time you add fresh weeds or kitchen scraps. These high-carbon materials will help keep the carbon/nitrogen ratio in balance.

* Shredded materials compost more rapidly. The more surface area for microbes to attack, the sooner you’ll have usable compost. You can chop your materials with a machete or shovel, run them through a shredding machine, or run over them with your lawn mower.

* Cover your pile for best results. It will deter pests, hold in heat, and keep the moisture level more constant. A pile that’s dry or too waterlogged takes a very long time to break down.

* In northern states, cover your pile in late fall to avoid leaching nutrients and to prevent the pile from becoming waterlogged. A drier pile will thaw more quickly the following spring.

* If skunks and burrowing rodents are hanging around your compost pile, you can use hardware cloth or purchase a Rodent Screen to place in the bottom of the composter. Avoid putting meat or fatty foods in your pile: they attract all sorts of animals.

Compost not hot: Materials in your compost may be too dry. This can happen quickly during the summer. Try to keep your compost materials moist to the touch. Inadequate nitrogen will also slow things down. Replenish the nitrogen content of your pile with fresh green grass clippings, garden weeds, kitchen scraps or an activator like Super Hot Compost Starter or Compost Accelerator.

Your pile may also be too small. In this case, collect more materials to help increase the microbial activity.