



NOVEMBER TIP SAVINGS: \$120-\$150/YR
Avoided Emissions of CO₂: Up to 320 lbs./YR

\$USTAINABILITY \$AVINGS TIP

COMPOSTING: BREAKING IT DOWN TO THE BASICS

Easy steps to turn green waste into mulch

Adding organic mulch or compost around your plants is an easy, cost-effective way to keep them healthy while suppressing weeds. Making your own compost is as simple as setting up a backyard bin. Applying composted mulch once or twice a year can reduce water needs by up to 30% while also making safe use of waste that would otherwise end up in a landfill.

**Mulch with
Compost and
save water, too!**

Composting speeds up nature's decomposition process, producing a nutrient-rich soil amendment perfect for gardens and landscapes. You can use kitchen scraps, yard trimmings, and other organic materials to get started.

COMPOSTING TIPS

1. **Pick the right spot.** Choose a location that's convenient, shaded, and close to a water source.
2. **Layer "browns" and "greens."** Alternating layers helps speed decomposition and reduce odor.
 - **Browns** – dry leaves, sawdust, chipped branches, shredded paper, straw, used paper towels. Bag and store extra leaves (elm, ash, pecan) for later use.
 - **Greens** – fruit and veggie scraps, coffee grounds, eggshells, grass clippings, weeds, or leafy trimmings.
3. **Add air and moisture.** Turn your pile occasionally and keep it as moist as a wrung-out sponge. Pour on cooking liquids (like from pasta) to help.
4. **Know when it's done.** Compost is ready when it smells earthy and you can no longer recognize the original materials.



CHECKLIST FOR SAVINGS

- ☐ **Mesa's Backyard Composting Program** offers compost containers (made from recycled trash bins) for a one-time **\$5.00** fee. Visit mesarecycles.org or call 480-644-2221.
- ☐ **Find books on gardening and composting** at City of Mesa Library, visit mesalibrary.org.
- ☐ **Steps to successful composting** and tips can be found on the back of this flyer.

\$TART \$AVING

Start saving by composting and doing your part for *building a sustainable community*. Visit our website for more sustainability savings tips at mesaaz.gov/sustainability.



STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL COMPOSTING

Once you have your compost bin, pick a **shady, wind-protected spot** near a water source and follow these simple steps:

1. **Prep your materials.** Cut or break items into small pieces (under 4 inches) so they decompose faster.
2. **Create airflow.** Clear a 2-inch space of soil under your bin and add a layer of small branches for ventilation.
3. **Layer it right.** Mix about **4 parts browns** (dry carbon-rich material) to **1 part greens** (moist nitrogen-rich material).
4. **Add soil or manure.** Sprinkle in a thin layer every few layers for microorganisms and nutrients.
5. **Keep it moist.** Water each layer as you go—damp like a wrung-out sponge, not soggy. Keep open during light rain events but cover during heavy rain.
6. **Seal it up.** When full, top with 2 inches of soil to retain heat and moisture.
7. **Let it heat.** Decomposition naturally warms the pile (up to 160°F), helping kill weed seeds and pathogens.
8. **Turn it.** When the pile cools to air temperature, aerate by mixing or transferring to another bin. Add water if dry.
9. **Check for readiness.** Compost is ready when it's dark, crumbly, and smells earthy.
10. **Use it!** Sift to remove larger pieces—return those to the bin to continue breaking down.



COMMON PROBLEMS & QUICK FIXES

SYMPTOM	LIKELY CAUSE	SOLUTION
Bad odor	Too wet / not enough air	Add dry material / turn the pile
Dry & not breaking down	Needs water or more greens	Add moisture and mix
Pile not heating	Too little or low nitrogen	Add greens, manure, coffee grounds
Flies or Ants	Food too close to surface	Cover with 2" soil or leaves

Learn to live Green