

# Compost Pile Troubleshooting

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Problem	Possible Causes	Solutions
Low temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not enough nitrogen</li> <li>- Too dry</li> <li>- Too wet</li> <li>- Pile too small to retain heat</li> <li>- Material too coarse or fine**</li> <li>- Pile has finished composting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mix in coffee grounds, food scraps, grass clippings, manure - Mix in water so pile is *50% moisture; cover to retain moisture - Mix in carbon (leaves, paper, woody materials; cover when raining - Add organics so pile is &gt;3x3x3 feet</li> <li>- Mix in different-sized materials</li> <li>- It's time to use the compost!</li> </ul>
Nothing decomposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Material too woody</li> <li>- Particle size too large</li> <li>- Pile too small</li> <li>- Not enough carbon</li> <li>- Not enough nitrogen</li> <li>- Not enough moisture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chip wood to &lt;2 inches</li> <li>- Shred or chip to &lt;2 inches</li> <li>- Build pile &gt;3x3x3 feet</li> <li>- Add shredded leaves, paper - Add coffee grounds, food scraps, grass, manure - Mix in water to 50%</li> </ul>
Flies around pile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Food waste exposed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cover food waste with carbon</li> </ul>
Pile too hot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Temperature above 160F, killing some beneficial microbes</li> <li>- Too much nitrogen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Turn pile to cool it</li> <li>- Mix in carbonaceous material</li> </ul>
Ammonia smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Too many grass clippings, or clumped together</li> <li>- Too much food scraps or manure</li> <li>- Not enough oxygen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tear apart clumps and mix thoroughly with carbon materials</li> <li>- Mix thoroughly with more carbon - Turn pile to add oxygen &amp; add coarse material</li> </ul>
Rotten or sulfurous odor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Too much food scraps or grass, or clumped together</li> <li>- Too wet</li> <li>- Particles too small</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tear apart clumps and mix thoroughly with carbon materials - Mix in carbon; cover when raining</li> <li>- Turn pile while adding carbon of different sizes and coarseness</li> </ul>

\*50% moisture level in pile: determine by grabbing a handful of material and squeezing it. When you open your hand, the material should stay clumped together but not have moisture dripping out. If the material crumbles, it is too dry.

\*\*Too much coarse material can make the pile dry; too much fine material will not allow oxygen to circulate in the pile.