



OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

GENERAL INFORMATION

The process of decomposition is started by micro-organisms feeding on plant matter and breaking it down into smaller and smaller pieces. When fully decomposed it forms humus, often called compost, which is a dark, soil-like material with a pleasant earthy smell. This is a soil conditioner. It retains water and contains nutrients which can be readily accessed by the roots of plants.

Composting is about speeding up the process of decomposition, which naturally takes a very long time. To produce compost quickly we need to create an environment in which the micro-organisms will multiply rapidly so they can break down organic waste materials. This process generates heat which is important because certain micro-organisms will only start working when the temperature is elevated. The more micro-organisms you have working the better! The needs of micro-organisms are simple - they require air, water and food.

The Tumbleweed Compost Maker has been designed specifically to provide micro-organisms with the ideal environment needed to produce compost quickly and easily with a minimal amount of effort.

LOCATING YOUR COMPOST MAKER

In a sunny spot. Heat absorbed from the sun will help to activate some of the micro-organisms.

Accessible position. The Tumbleweed Compost Maker needs to be turned on a regular basis, so place it in an easily accessible location.

Mount on any surface. The ground surface does not need to be perfectly flat. Situate on lawn or concrete.

WHAT TO PUT IN

What you add is "food" for the micro-organisms and it must be organic, i.e. anything that has once been alive, such as: lawn clippings, leaves, flowers, green prunings, vegetable scraps, and general garden waste. It also helps if it is in small pieces. A simple way to achieve this is by running your lawn mower over any garden waste such as leaves and dead flowers. Grass clippings are an ideal ingredient as they are small and quick to decompose. **The Tumbleweed Compost Maker will make compost entirely of grass clippings with no need to add other ingredients.** If you wish to add other ingredients such as vegetable scraps, aim for a mix of 75% grass clippings to 25% other materials. The reason for this is that vegetable scraps contain a lot of water. If the water content is too high it becomes difficult to ensure that there is sufficient air for the microorganisms to work effectively. If you produce a lot of vegetable scraps, your best option may be to use a Tumbleweed Worm Farm to recycle them.

If you wish to enrich your compost you can add blood and bone or something similar. However these are usually better applied directly to soil to benefit particular plants. We do not recommend adding worms to the bin, however when you put compost onto the garden it will attract worms into the enriched soil.

WHAT NOT TO PUT IN

Twigs or large woody prunings as they are very slow to decompose in any composting system. Also meat, fish, fat, bones, dog droppings and dairy products as these also decompose slowly and may cause odors.

FILLING AND TUMBLING THE BIN

There are two ways to operate the bin:

1. Fill the bin all in one go. Tumble several times every two to three days and you should have compost in about four weeks.

2. Fill the bin over a period of time. Continue to turn as above on a regular basis. Compost will be ready in about four weeks from the time that you stop adding ingredients.

Regular tumbling every two to three days is important as it provides the aeration necessary for the micro-organisms to do their work. You should also be aware that as the contents of the Compost Maker decompose they will reduce in volume. A full tumbler of organic waste will produce about 25% of the volume of compost. If you do not generate a large amount of organic waste in your garden you can still use the Compost Maker successfully. It does not have to be full before you begin making your compost.

Tumbling the Compost Maker is easy. Simply stand at the side of it and place one hand at each end of the Compost Maker. Then tumble by pushing down with one hand and lifting with the other as shown on "Assembly Instruction Sheet".

USING YOUR COMPOST

To use as mulch: Spread it over the surface of your garden bed to a depth of about 5cm or more. This will prevent moisture loss from your soil – worms will be attracted to the enriched soil.

To use as compost: If you have poor soil, such as predominantly clay or sand, digging in the compost will help to improve the soil condition and attract worms.

IN SUMMARY

The key points for success are:

- ✓ **Sunny position**
- ✓ **75% grass cuttings to 25% other organic waste**
- ✓ **Small pieces of organic waste**
- ✓ **Tumble every two to three days**

TROUBLE-SHOOTING

Problems usually occur when the micro-organisms that cause decomposition do not have the right working environment. Here are some common problems:

My compost is wet: This is caused by the ingredients having high moisture content. You may be adding too many vegetable scraps. Remember the proportion is 75% grass cuttings to 25% other ingredients. If it is too wet you can remedy the problem by adding dry ingredients such as torn scraps of newspaper or dry leaves. If this does not rectify the problem empty the bin and start again. Your compost should have the moisture content of a well squeezed sponge.

The contents of my bin are very hot: This is good news and a sign that the micro-organisms are doing their work. It will eventually cool down and produce compost.