

# Colorado Loves Clean Compost

Composting or “organics recycling” is the process of collecting and processing organic material, such as food and yard waste that would otherwise be thrown away as trash, and turning it into compost for you to use at home, business or garden. Composting can help benefit your community, the environment, and your future!

## Why is composting and using compost good?

Composting helps to reduce the amount of things like food scraps, lawn clippings, and yard waste from going to a landfill. The more stuff we prevent from being collected in a landfill, the better. By using the food scraps, lawn clippings, and yard waste we saved from landfill, and turning it into compost, we can make the environment around us and even our own backyards better. When you put compost in the soil in your garden, for example, you can help your plants grow, improve the health of your soil, save water, and even help stop climate change.

## How can I compost?

Composting can be a really fun activity for you to start doing at your home, school, or in your city. Some cities and towns provide composting to the people who live in their community. You can ask your city or trash/recycling provider if it is an option for your home. If your city or trash/recycling provider does not provide composting, you can start composting on your own. Resources on how to do this can be found on page 5.

## What items can I compost and put in my compost bin?

Just like recycling, only certain things can go into a compost bin. If you compost at your home, your family can decide what you want to put into your compost bin. If you compost with your city or trash/recycling provider, there are guidelines you must follow. Every city is different so make sure you carefully read what can be composted in your area. If you live in Colorado’s Front Range (Denver, Boulder, Fort Collins), there are new guidelines for everyone. These new guidelines say you can only put food and yard waste in your compost bin. This includes fruit and vegetables, coffee grounds, grass clippings, twigs and branches, and leaves. Items like compostable cups, silverware, and plates/bowls, leaf bags, and compostable bags larger than 3 gallons, are not allowed in the compost bin anymore.

## What is contaminant and why is it bad?

Composting and recycling both have contaminants. Contaminants are items that don’t belong in your composting or recycling bin and are the things not shown on your recycling/composting guide. When you compost & recycle the right items, they can be recycled and become new products. When items that are not on your guideline go into the recycling or compost bin, it can prevent your items from being recycled and composted. To help make sure your compost is clean and can be used, follow the composting rules!

Just like any other system, success depends on many small actions and those actions all add up! Please, compost and recycle with care and help reduce waste. It’s always best to consult your local government or service provider for the best information about what is compostable in your community.

**Please use the additional resources on the next page to help students learn more about composting or to create a lesson around it!**

# Talking Points for Teachers on Composting

Did you know that composting is different in every home, city, county and state. What do you know about composting in your home or community?

To learn more, you can look up composting in your city or county to see what kind of composting is provided or ask your family about composting at your home. Here is a helpful link to learn more what kind of composting is offered in your area: <https://www.litterless.com/where-to-compost/colorado>

- Do you compost at your home or does a truck or hauler come to collect your composting?
- If you live in a multifamily home (apartment, condo, townhouse), do you have a composting bin or where do you bring your compostables?
- What does your composting bin at home or provided by your city or trash/recycler provider look like?
- Do you live in Colorado's Front Range (Denver, Boulder, Fort Collins)? What items are on your community's, home's, or school's composting guideline? Do they match the [new guidelines](#)?
- Can you name 3 other items that you can compost at your home or in your community?
- Can you give 3 examples of a contaminant?

**How can adding compost help my home, garden, community and the environment?**

- Composting helps to reduce the amount of stuff that would have gone to a landfill and turns it into a usable product that helps our environment.
- By composting your food and yard waste instead of it going to the landfill, you can reduce the amount of greenhouse gasses emitted by your waste. This helps reduce our impact on climate change.
- By using compost in your yard or garden, you are recycling nutrients back into your soil. Healthier and more nutritious soil can help your lawn and garden grow.
- Adding compost to your lawn or garden can help reduce your water consumption. This is especially useful in a place like Colorado that has a dry climate. Compost helps hold water in your soil and brings it where it's needed so you don't need to water your lawn as much.
- Compost helps to build soil and prevent soil erosion.

**Why is it important to follow my community or home's compost rules?**

- Whether you are composting or recycling, you should always follow your home or community's guidelines for recycling and composting. These guidelines help ensure the right items are going into the right place to be processed.
- Contaminants are big problems in both composting and recycling. When contaminants end up in your bin, it can ruin your compost or prevent your items from being recycled.
- When your items can't be processed, your food scraps and leaves that would have made good compost, end up in the landfill. We want to try to prevent as much stuff from going to the landfill as possible.
- **Think of making compost like baking a cake. You need the right ingredients in order for your cake to turn out perfect. Compost is the same way. If there is too much of the wrong ingredient, like contaminants, then you won't make good compost.**
- You've heard of microplastics, right? Little pieces of plastic that can float in the ocean and are eaten by fish, birds and other animals. They are not good for our environment. When plastic contaminants make their way into compost, it puts microplastics back into the environment which we do not want.

## Information for Front Range Composters

- **Why are compostables, paper towels, leaf bags and compostable bags no longer accepted in the Front Range compost?** In our cake example, if you can add a little extra chocolate chips to the cake, it will still bake fine, but when you add WAY too much, the cake won't turn out correct and no one will want to eat your cake because it is just melted chocolate (unless you love chocolate). In compost, when you have too many compostable cups, silverware and bags in the compost mix, the compost has a harder time of forming and won't create the same, quality product like the good stuff does (food and yard waste).
- **Why can I only use a 3 gallon or smaller compostable bag in the Front Range?** Imagine you have three cups and there is a ball under one of them. You have to guess which cup the ball is under. Composters have to guess which bags that come into their facility are a contaminant or are full of contaminants. There are so many bags that come in everyday to a compost facility that it is hard to keep track of which are contaminants. By limiting which kind can be composted, it makes it easier to prevent contamination from getting into compost.
- **Why are paper products not allowed in Front Range compost anymore?** Although paper is technically made from a tree which is compostable, you can never know if an item also has plastic on it. Plastic does not belong in our compost or in our soil. When in doubt, it is safer to throw your cup or silverware in the trash than contaminate the compost.

## Additional Resources to use in your Classroom

Activities for kids, <https://www.recyclecolorado.org/poster-contest>

- Mesa County's Composting Activity Book for Kids: <https://www.recyclecolorado.org/assets/COMPOSTBOOK.PDF>
- Compost Crossword: <https://www.recyclecolorado.org/assets/Cross%20Word.pdf>
- Compost Word Find: <https://www.recyclecolorado.org/assets/Word%20Find.pdf>

### Videos

- Why is composting important: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFlsjRXbnSk>
- Peppa Pig can help explain how to compost: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PElbErayZg>
- Bill Nye helps to explain composting and waste: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ToWxCwOfORA>
- How you can start composting at home: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJuiNtXXB58>

### Websites

- Read about each of the benefits of compost on the US Composting Council's Website: <https://www.compostingcouncil.org/page/CompostBenefits>
- Read and Learn more about why composting matters on Colorado's largest compost manufacturer's website: <https://a1organics.com/resources/why-composting-matters/>
- Learn how you can compost at home:
- A learner's guide for composting: <https://quiethut.com/composting-for-kids/>
- An example of how you can start composting at your school: <https://urbanwormcompany.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Composting-at-School-Vermont.pdf>
- New Composting Guidelines for the Front Range: <https://www.recyclecolorado.org/compost-contamination>

