



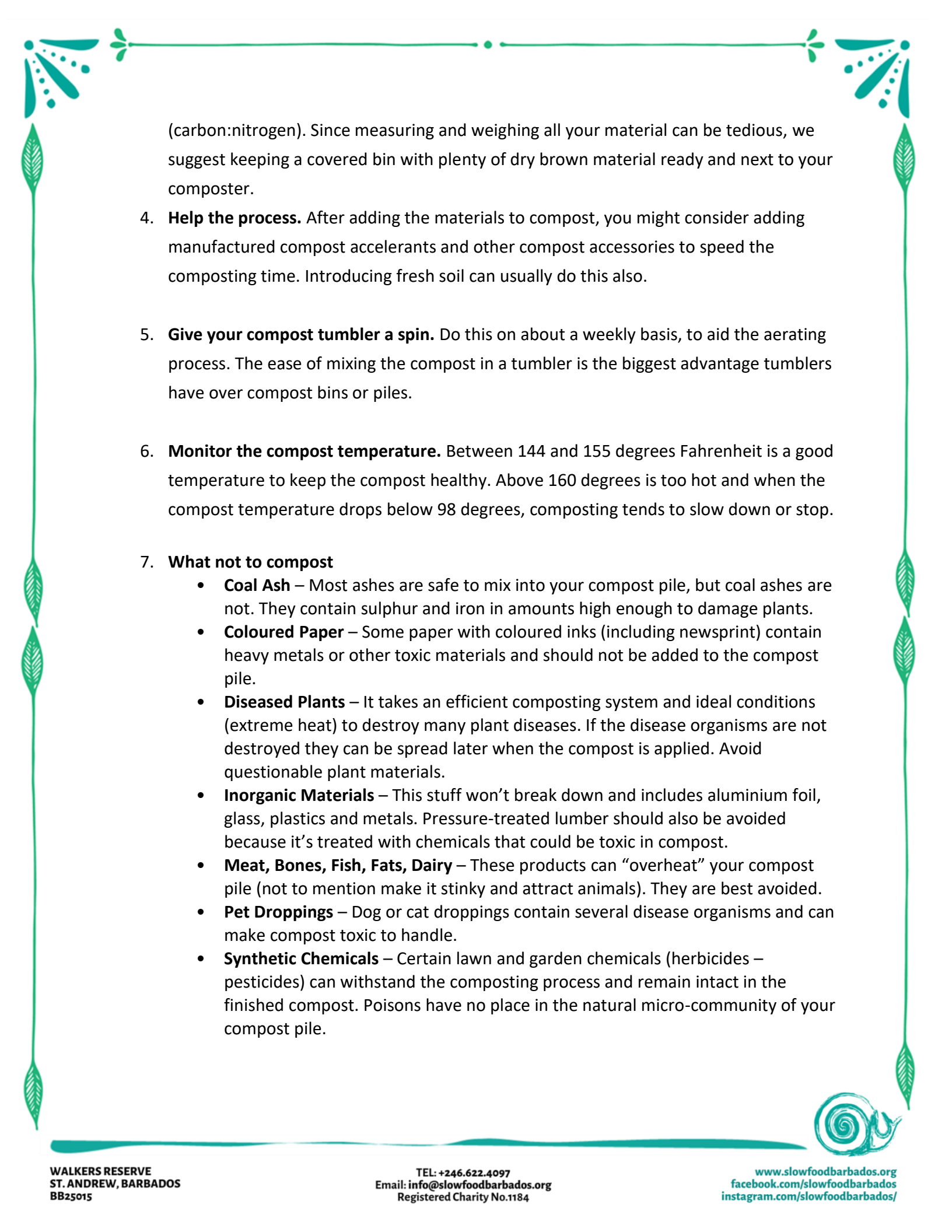
## How to Compost in a Tumbler

Composting is an effective way to do something useful with kitchen scraps and yard refuse. It saves valuable landfill space and gives you rich, dark soil for gardens and planting that you don't pay any money for. Composting can even be a fun activity! Let's learn how to compost in a compost tumbler.

### Steps

1. **Select a location for your compost tumbler.** It should be sunny and provide decent air flow. The aeration of the bacteria in the compost tumbler is what makes it work.
2. **Add composting materials.** Kitchen scraps and yard waste, like leaves and grass clippings, work well. Avoid meat products as they don't break down as readily and can attract vermin. Choosing the right composting materials will keep this from becoming troublesome. In order to make your composting process work optimum make sure that everything is cut up or shredded into small pieces.
3. **Make sure the amounts of each component are right.** Composting is a science and it boils down to the right amount of each ingredient. If there is only wet materials (kitchen scraps) the system can go anaerobic and start to smell. If there is too much dry material the system will take much longer to compost. You need Carbon (brown stuff), Nitrogen (green stuff), Oxygen, Moisture, and Time in the mix. The degree of attention you give to the materials you use, the quality of those materials, their ratios in the mix, particle size and moisture control will all influence the speed of composting and its quality. All organic material contains carbon and nitrogen to greater or lesser degrees. Materials high in carbon generally are brown in color (autumn leaves, straw, dry grass, etc.) and materials high in nitrogen are frequently green in color (fresh cut green grass, kitchen scraps, etc.). By weight (not volume), a good rule of thumb is to have roughly 3 times the amount of "brown" to "green" material. This will balance the carbon to nitrogen ratio to the appropriate level. The optimum ratio by volume is about 3:1

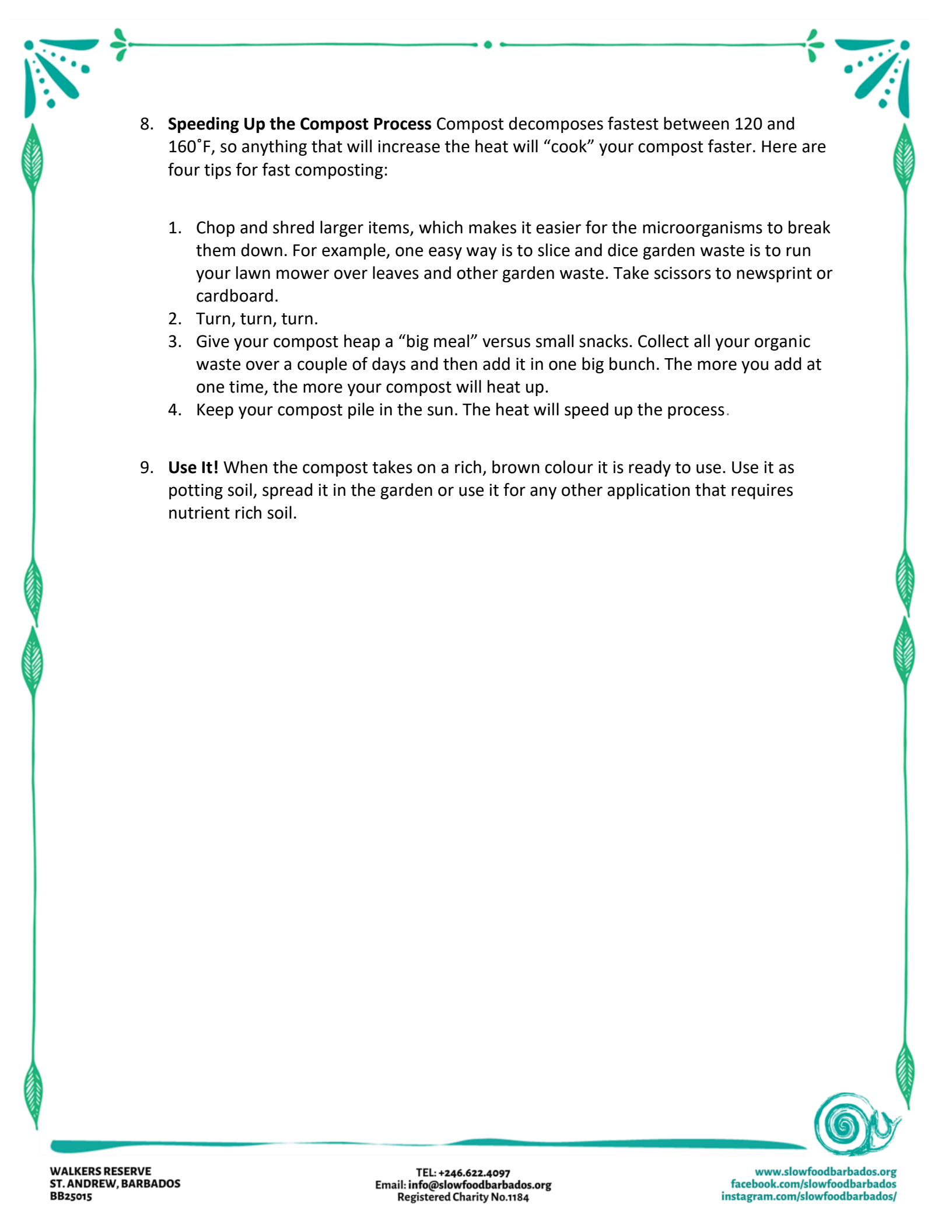




(carbon:nitrogen). Since measuring and weighing all your material can be tedious, we suggest keeping a covered bin with plenty of dry brown material ready and next to your composter.

4. **Help the process.** After adding the materials to compost, you might consider adding manufactured compost accelerants and other compost accessories to speed the composting time. Introducing fresh soil can usually do this also.
5. **Give your compost tumbler a spin.** Do this on about a weekly basis, to aid the aerating process. The ease of mixing the compost in a tumbler is the biggest advantage tumblers have over compost bins or piles.
6. **Monitor the compost temperature.** Between 144 and 155 degrees Fahrenheit is a good temperature to keep the compost healthy. Above 160 degrees is too hot and when the compost temperature drops below 98 degrees, composting tends to slow down or stop.
7. **What not to compost**
  - **Coal Ash** – Most ashes are safe to mix into your compost pile, but coal ashes are not. They contain sulphur and iron in amounts high enough to damage plants.
  - **Coloured Paper** – Some paper with coloured inks (including newsprint) contain heavy metals or other toxic materials and should not be added to the compost pile.
  - **Diseased Plants** – It takes an efficient composting system and ideal conditions (extreme heat) to destroy many plant diseases. If the disease organisms are not destroyed they can be spread later when the compost is applied. Avoid questionable plant materials.
  - **Inorganic Materials** – This stuff won't break down and includes aluminium foil, glass, plastics and metals. Pressure-treated lumber should also be avoided because it's treated with chemicals that could be toxic in compost.
  - **Meat, Bones, Fish, Fats, Dairy** – These products can “overheat” your compost pile (not to mention make it stinky and attract animals). They are best avoided.
  - **Pet Droppings** – Dog or cat droppings contain several disease organisms and can make compost toxic to handle.
  - **Synthetic Chemicals** – Certain lawn and garden chemicals (herbicides – pesticides) can withstand the composting process and remain intact in the finished compost. Poisons have no place in the natural micro-community of your compost pile.





8. **Speeding Up the Compost Process** Compost decomposes fastest between 120 and 160°F, so anything that will increase the heat will “cook” your compost faster. Here are four tips for fast composting:

1. Chop and shred larger items, which makes it easier for the microorganisms to break them down. For example, one easy way is to slice and dice garden waste is to run your lawn mower over leaves and other garden waste. Take scissors to newsprint or cardboard.
2. Turn, turn, turn.
3. Give your compost heap a “big meal” versus small snacks. Collect all your organic waste over a couple of days and then add it in one big bunch. The more you add at one time, the more your compost will heat up.
4. Keep your compost pile in the sun. The heat will speed up the process.

9. **Use It!** When the compost takes on a rich, brown colour it is ready to use. Use it as potting soil, spread it in the garden or use it for any other application that requires nutrient rich soil.

# A QUICK GUIDE TO COMPOSTING

## THROW IT IN!



## NOT THIS BIN!



## Greens vs Browns

THE MIXTURE OF **GREEN** AND **BROWN** MATERIALS IS A CRUCIAL COMBINATION FOR COMPOSTING SUCCESS. **GREEN MATERIALS** ARE RICH IN NITROGEN OR PROTEIN WHILE **BROWN MATERIALS** ARE CARBON RICH AND ACT AS FOOD SOURCES FOR ALL THE ORGANISMS AND MICROBES THAT BREAK DOWN YOUR COMPOST.

**TIP** IF YOUR COMPOST SEEMS TOO SLIMY AND WET, JUST ADD MORE BROWN MATTER!



**HOW MUCH?** ADD ROUGHLY 3 PARTS OF BROWN TO ONE PART GREEN MATTER TO YOUR COMPOST BIN!

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