

## 3 Bin System Composting

Bins 1 and 2: Working/Turning Bins

Bin 3: Near Finished/Finished Bin

### **First of Month/Middle of Month:**

- 1.** Your goal is to get the contents of Bin 1 into Bin 2 (or vice versa). You should always have an empty bin for the purpose of turning into at each scheduled turning.
- 2.** Turning is best done with a garden fork for top 3/4 of pile and a shovel for the bottom 1/4 of pile.
- 3.** At the halfway point of your turning, add a thin layer of dirt from somewhere in the garden or a thin layer of compost from Bin 3. Add a cupful of pelletized, composted chicken manure, bloodmeal or bonemeal. Continue turning. As you get to the middle bottom of the pile you are turning FROM, you may find that the material appears more "finished", i.e. it is dark brown, crumbly, sweet smelling. Turn this into Bin 3 -the near finished/finished pile.
- 4.** All compost bins should be just slightly moist. If there has been no rain and none is imminent, then get the hose and MODERATELY WATER YOUR FRESHLY TURNED PILE. Conversely, if a week of rain is being predicted, consider covering all the compost bins with a tarp
- 5.** Directions for Bin 3: After you finish with the first two bins, take the time to "fluff" Bin 3. Stick the fork or a compost turner into all sections of Bin 3; lift and fluff. If it is dry, moderately water it as well.

Composting is a science: Carbons (brown, dry materials) have to mix with Nitrogens (green, pliable material) in a ratio of about 30:1 – the C:N Ratio. In other words, the compost pile should be 30 parts brown and dry things to 1 part green and pliable things. A shovelful of soil adds soil bacteria. Slight moisture is necessary for the soil organisms to thrive. A bit of nitrogen in the form of composted manure, bloodmeal or bonemeal adds to the bacterial feast. Air has to be able to reach all parts of the pile (aerobic composting). Finally, temperatures HAVE to reach 140-150 degrees in the center of the pile for composting to take place.

Composting is an art: Be subjective: does it smell, feel, look?

By Julie Hogg

