



START A COMMUNITY COMPOST

A COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDE

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Please read through the whole guide to get an understanding of what is required to start a community compost. Once you've done this, email us at hello@3000acres.org to tell us you're interested in starting one or to ask us any questions and we'll work with you to explore the options available and any next steps.

Turning waste into a resource for the garden is an essential part of creating sustainable urban systems. We believe there is a composting or worm farming solution for everyone, regardless of where you live.

For advice on setting up a composting system at your home, we recommend checking out these resources:

<https://compostrevolution.com.au/tutorials/>

<https://www.sgaonline.org.au/the-science-of-composting/>

If you aren't able to compost on your property, check out [ShareWaste](#) which links people with scraps to those who have composts and are willing to take donations. Sometimes it can take a while to find the right match on ShareWaste - but be patient and contact a few people!

We want to support more groups and individuals to create community composts, where those who are unable to compost at home can bring their scraps. As more and more individuals are renting and living in apartments, these community composts play an invaluable role in creating sustainable, resilient urban environments. This guide hopes to provide advice and resources for those individuals and groups willing to go above and beyond.

Setting up your community compost

Location

The first thing you need to do when setting up a community compost is choose your location. We've seen successful community composts in people's gardens, in shared garden areas of apartment complexes, on nature strips (council permitting) and in

community gardens. Any location can work with people willing to manage it and the right system.

What System?

Next, you need to choose the compost system that will work best for you or your group. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What sort of bays/bins will we use?
- Who can drop off to this compost? Locals? Anyone?
- What can people drop off? Is bokashi waste okay?
- What sort of signage will we need? Do we need to make it clear that this is compost (ie no plastic bags or dog poo)?
- How do people add their scraps? Is the bin accessible or do they need to use a swap-and-go kitchen caddy system?

Some resources that might be helpful in this thinking include:

<https://www.directcompostsolutions.com/8-methods-composting/>

<https://www.sgaonline.org.au/choosing-a-compost-bin/>

<https://www.gardensthatmatter.com/infographic-best-compost-method/>

Finding resources for your community compost

There are some resources that will be helpful as you set up your community compost. Some composters may have their own bucket or kitchen caddy that they collect food scraps in, but you can also find one that is reused rather than produced new. We regularly source 5 litre and 10 litre buckets from cafes and bakeries which have previously been used to hold food sold in bulk. These buckets were destined to be put back into the waste system, but instead can be used as a DIY kitchen caddy! We recommend asking around at local cafes (they may hold on to them for you!) - and make sure you get the lids as well!

Another resource you'll be in need of for your compost is carbon-rich (brown) materials which balance out all of the nitrogen-rich (green) materials being dropped off. Most of the time, people will want to drop off their kitchen scraps, but you can encourage them to add carbon-rich materials such as ripped up newspaper and cardboard (such as old egg cartons).

On top of that, you might want to source some of your own carbon-rich materials in bulk that you can pour in periodically when turning the compost. Examples that we've been able to source from local sources for free in bulk include:

- Wood shavings from untreated hardwood - from carpenters
- Shredded scrap paper (unbleached where possible) - from offices
- Newspapers - from cafes

Other waste products can be helpful in bulk as well, such as coffee grounds, such as from [Reground](#) and coffee chaff from roasters. [Local Food Connect](#) has collated a list of these resources available in Melbourne North-East here:

<https://localfoodconnect.org.au/community-gardening/resources/#wood>

Promoting your community compost

Once your compost system is set up and ready to go, you need to find people with food scraps! Signing up for [ShareWaste](#) as a host is a great place to start - make sure to be clear on what waste you will and will not accept.

We also recommend you go local and talk to neighbours and nearby apartment complexes. A nice note in the mailbox about what you're doing might attract a new composter (and maybe even friend!)

Supporting new composters

As more and more people begin using your community compost, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- Being clear about what can and cannot be put in your compost will help avoid contamination - consider signs and a short induction for new composters. Sometimes people will be using bags that they believe are compostable, but will actually not break down in your system.
- Often people will be starting with a low-knowledge base about composting. They might accidentally add contaminants without realising it, such as fruit stickers, animal products or plastic bags. You can play a role in educating them about this - either putting up signs, sending them with a checklist, or explaining things verbally during an induction. If you are a compost connoisseur and feel very strongly about what does and doesn't go into your compost, we recommend embracing a little more flexibility when working with newbie composters.

If you require help with your community composting project, feel free to get in touch with us at hello@3000acres.org

NEXT STEPS

Email us at hello@3000acres.org to discuss any queries you have about starting a community compost or to explore options and next steps.