

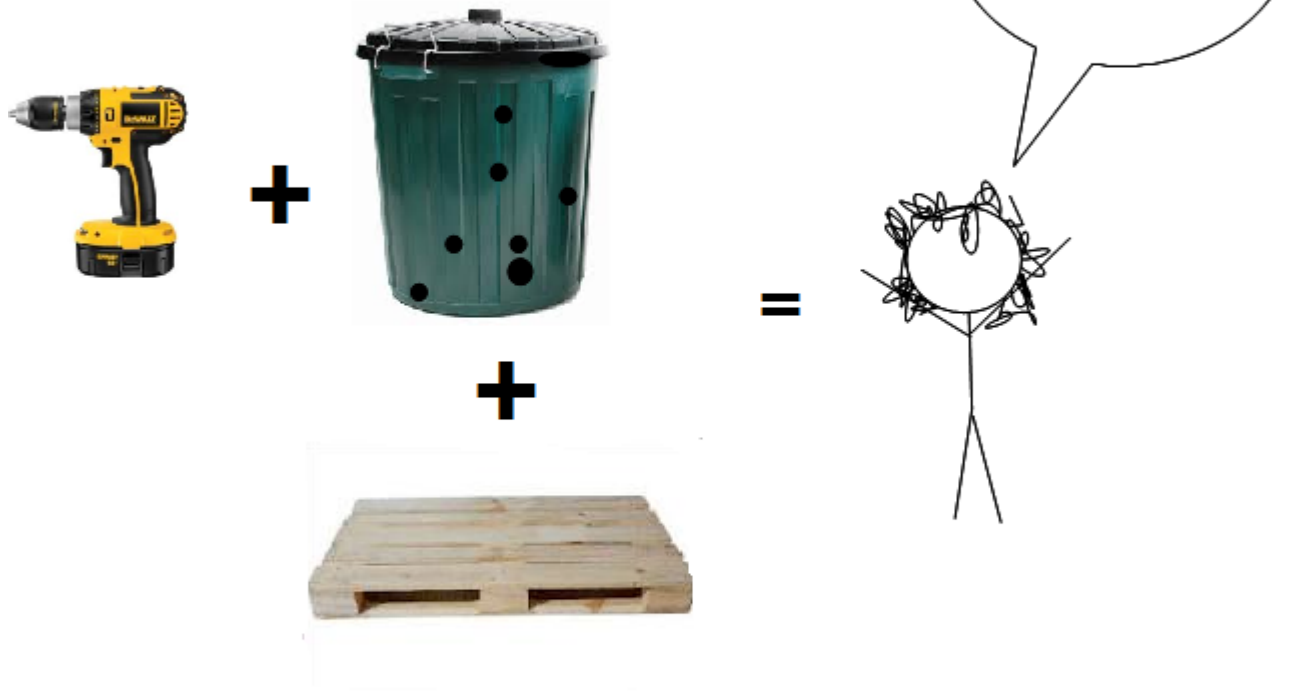
As blizzard conditions set in for northerners, we in Austin live with the fortune of being in a region that maintains an almost-perpetual summer. Though we are still months away from cultivating fruits and vegetables, the mild and beautiful Austin winters allow residents to prepare for their home gardens. Composting not only reduces landfill-space by reclaiming leftover foodstuffs that would otherwise be left to forever sit in garbage bags, composting greatly reduces the cost of using store-bought fertilizer and bagged soil.

Commercial composting bins can get pricey, ranging well up into the hundreds of dollars. Making a composting bin at home is both simple and inexpensive and require only a screw driver, a trashcan with a locking lid, and a wooden pallet.



Using a plastic trashcan is both inexpensive and optimal, as plastic trashcans are much easier to put holes into. Avoid flying messes of decomposing fruit and rotting leaves, as well as animals accessing your compost by using a locking lid. Using a dark-colored trash can allows for better insulation to encourage the composting of the contents inside.

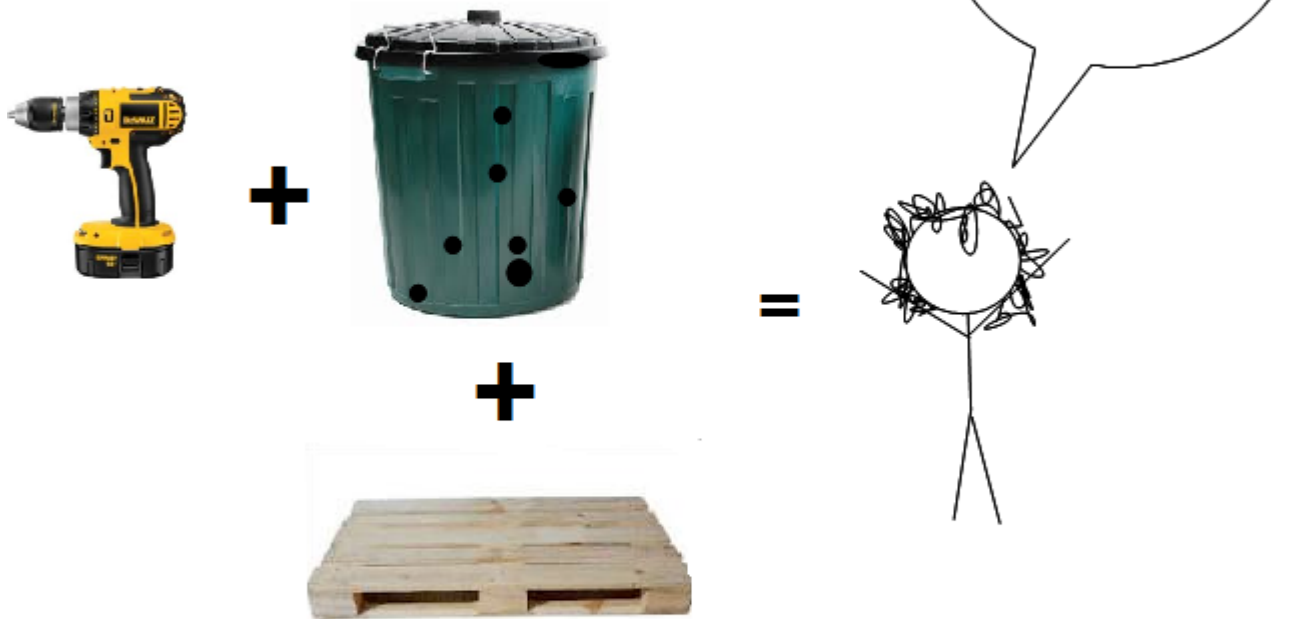
Step two: Using your drill, attach the trashcan to the wooden pallet. Leave some of the holes on the bottom of the trash can empty to allow drainage.



Put several holes into the sides, bottom, and lid of your new compost bin. Adding holes allows ventilation. Ventilation allows oxygen to reach the material inside the bin and assist with decomposition, and also helps curb the odor expected with composting. The holes also allow proper drainage. It is important to have adequate drainage as water buildup can drown helpful bacteria and attract racoons and other animals, as well as invite mosquitoes.

*Please note, a drill is adequate for adding holes.

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Using your screwdriver (which, hopefully is the tool you chose for putting holes in your compost bin) attach the bin to a wooden pallet. The wooden pallet is necessary for drainage, and also saves the grass underneath your compost bin. DO NOT FILL ALL THE HOLES WITH SCREWS. Leave some holes open for drainage through the bottom.

Finally, you are ready to fill your brand new, homemade compost bin.

Fill your new composting bin with items suitable for composting.

YES!



Coffee Grounds



Fruit & Vegetable Scraps



Untreated Yardwaste



Eggshells

NO!



Pet Waste



Garbage



Meat



Grandma

What you place into your compost bin is as important as the structure of the compost bin itself.

While scraps of food such as vegetable peels and fruit rinds are acceptable, it is not recommended that you dispose of meat into the compost bin.

Helpful tips for maintaining proper moisture:

If your compost becomes too dry, open the lid during a light rain or add water from your garden hose. If your compost becomes too wet, open the lid on a sunny day to let some of the moisture evaporate. However; being as Austin is currently under drought conditions, be sure to leave your compost in a shady spot during the ungodly hot months.

Your compost will soon turn into nutrient-rich soil perfect for fertilizing your garden, potted plants, or thrown directly onto your yard.

For more information on what can and cannot be composted, see the EPA's extensive list of what should or should not be composted:

<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conservation/rrr/composting/basic.htm>