**A Summary of Common Composting Problems and Solutions**

| **Problem** | **Symptom** | **Immediate Remedy** | **Long-Term Remedies** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Material is not decomposing. | Material is moist and dense but not wet. | Fluff pile with a pitchfork. | Aerate pile routinely. |
| Pile is saturated with water. | Material is wet, smelly, matted and may be oozing. | Turn pile and add dry brown material such as straw, sawdust, and pine needles. | Cover pile to prevent excess rain or run-off from soaking the pile. Aerate routinely. |
| Fall leaves are not breaking down. | Material is dry to touch. Very little life active in pile. | Add greens such as kitchen scraps or lawn clippings. Soak pile, turning and soaking until moist all through. | Maintain an ideal carbon to nitrogen ratio. |
| The compost caught on fire. | Smoke visible in the compost, charred center of the pile. | Moisten pile with water and mix in more browns to balance. | Maintain an ideal carbon to nitrogen ratio. Avoid excess nitrogen. Turn frequently. |
| Compost lacks life. | When turned with a pitchfork the exposed compost is devoid of life. | Assess moisture content and C:N ratio. Jumpstart by adding an amount of compost from an established pile. | "Add fresh horse manure (a source of red wrigglers) to help population growth. If unavailable, add fresh cow or pig manures. |
| The sticks are not breaking down. | No evidence that the woody material is breaking down. | Remove large wood chunks. | Only add woody materials in small amounts and pieces. |

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## Waite Park Composting Tasks

# May 2019

1. **Gardeners** use the city compost, delivered last fall, to cover plots to prevent weeds from taking root before the garden crops can be planted. This compost is in the middle of the garden.
2. **BINS 3 sets**: Combine the winter compost into the **Closed to New Plant Material** bin. This combined **Closed to New Plant Material** bin will become available for use later in the season and can be used to inoculate the new compost materials in the newly emptied **Add New Plant Materials** Bin as it fills during the spring cleanup and over the summer months.
3. Put up **Add New Plant Materials** and **Closed to New Plant Material** signs. Put additional boards across the front if needed.
4. Establish a **BAD Weed Pile** beside the compost where quack grass, thistle, and creeping can be composted in a very hot pile. These weeds because of their invasive nature cannot be put into the compost bins used for garden plots. **Our garden compost bins do not get hot enough to compost these weeds.**

# Black Gold Recipe

Carbon to Nitrogen ratio: 30:1 (2 browns to every green)

* CARBON: stems, leaves, peels, wood, bark dust, shredded brown paper bags, corn stalks, coffee
* NITROGEN: green plant material
* **Put NO** plastic, **NO** tomato plants, **NO** creeping Charlie, **NO** quack grass, **NO** thistle, **NO** diseased plants, **NO** weed seeds into the compost bins. Carry plastic markers and pots out to your own trash can or recycling bin.
* Feed the weeds to the **BAD Weed Pile** and chop.
* Carry out diseased and tomato plants to your own trash or yard waste.

# Community Gardeners

### Weekly throughout the growing season:

1. Stir and water the **Closed to New Plant Material** bin.
2. Put your BLACK GOLD ingredients into the **Add New Plant Materials** bin, chop them and stir them in. This bin will not be harvested this year. Inoculate with compost from the **Closed to New Plant Material** bin, and water. The compost should feel like a wet sponge.
3. Feed the **BAD Weed Pile** when needed and chop. This pile needs to become very hot during the summer months.

* **Later in the season**: harvest the **Closed to New Plant Material** bin compost with all of its microbes and fungi to mulch around your garden plants, the garden’s perennial garden plants, and around the fruit trees, spreading 3 – 6 inch layer outside of a 1 – 2 feet ring from base of the tree. Fluff it occasionally so it doesn’t compact. If it gets too wet, rake the mulch away from the tree.
* During the season, consider **lasagna composting right in your garden bed**. Layer the ingredients across a section of your plot and cover with your plot’s soil. Chop and water.