

# Troubleshooting Guide for Composting Holding Units and Turning Systems



Symptom	Cause	Solutions
Pile has foul odour	Not enough air Pile too wet Meat and fish added to pile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Turn it, add coarse dry stalks, straw, hay, leaves or bush trimmings</li> <li>➤ Limit food scraps to vegetative ones</li> </ul>
Clumps of slimy grass, sharp ammonia smell	Too much fresh grass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Leave cuttings on lawn or allow them to dry for a day or two before collecting them for composting.</li> <li>➤ Mix in brown leaves, straw, hay, bush trimming, stems, stalks, or wood shavings. Remember the 50/50 rule of mixing green and brown materials.</li> </ul>
Pile is dry throughout	Not enough water  Too much woody material Pile is in sunny location Pile may be too small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Turn it and moisten materials</li> <li>➤ Cover pile</li> <li>➤ Add fresh green materials</li> <li>➤ Move bin to a more shady location</li> <li>➤ Add materials or combine with another pile.</li> </ul>
Pile is damp, but woody and not composting	Materials are too big Lack of green materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Chop or shred materials</li> <li>➤ Turn and mix in a source of green materials such as grass cuttings or animal manure</li> </ul>
A swarm of flies greets you when you open the lid	Pile is too wet  Food scraps are placed on top	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mix in dry materials or add some on top</li> <li>➤ Bury food scraps within the pile</li> <li>➤ Cover pile with wet newspaper or a plastic sheet</li> </ul>
Rats live in the pile	High protein food waste in pile Food waste on top Warm and dry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Stop adding animal products to bin</li> <li>➤ Bury food scraps into pile</li> <li>➤ Turn pile frequently to disturb nesting</li> <li>➤ Place mesh under or around the base of the pile or bin</li> </ul>
Pile does not heat up	Not enough material Too dry Not enough fresh green materials Particles too big Compacted or too dense- no air spaces in pile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Make bigger batches</li> <li>➤ Add moisture when pile is turned</li> <li>➤ Add fresh green materials when turned</li> <li>➤ Chop or shred materials</li> <li>➤ Turn to introduce air and loosen up the pile</li> </ul>
Pile has shrunk, but looks undecomposed	Outside of pile is dry, inside probably composted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Check in pile for finished compost.</li> <li>➤ If compost is not ready, turn pile, add water if necessary and allow it to finish</li> <li>➤ If compost is ready, harvest compost and use undecomposed material to start a new batch.</li> </ul>