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Joe Mayle  
Carroll SWCD

# Composting 101

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# Overview

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- ▶ What is Composting?
- ▶ Items to Compost
- ▶ Items not to Compost
- ▶ Why Compost?
- ▶ Keys to Composting
- ▶ Composting Structures

# What is Composting?

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- ▶ Composting is the process by which microbes convert plant material into a usable organic soil amendment or mulch.

# Composting Is:

Going from this:



To this:



# Composting vs. Mulching

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## Composting

- ▶ Converting plant or other organic material into a more usable form
- ▶ Composted material can be incorporated into soil-add structure & nutrients

## Mulching

- ▶ Placing a layer of plant material or composted material on the soil surface
- ▶ Controls: Soil Temp, Soil Moisture, Weeds, Erosion

# What can we compost?

- ▶ Organic Plant Material
  - ▶ Leaves
  - ▶ Grass Clippings
  - ▶ Sawdust
  - ▶ Wood Chips (not braches or logs)
  - ▶ Vegetable Scraps
  - ▶ Fruit Waste

# Items to stay away from!

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- ▶ Human, Cat, Dog  
Feces – may transmit  
diseases
- ▶ Meat, Bones, Grease –  
may attract.....

...these guys!

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# Why Compost?

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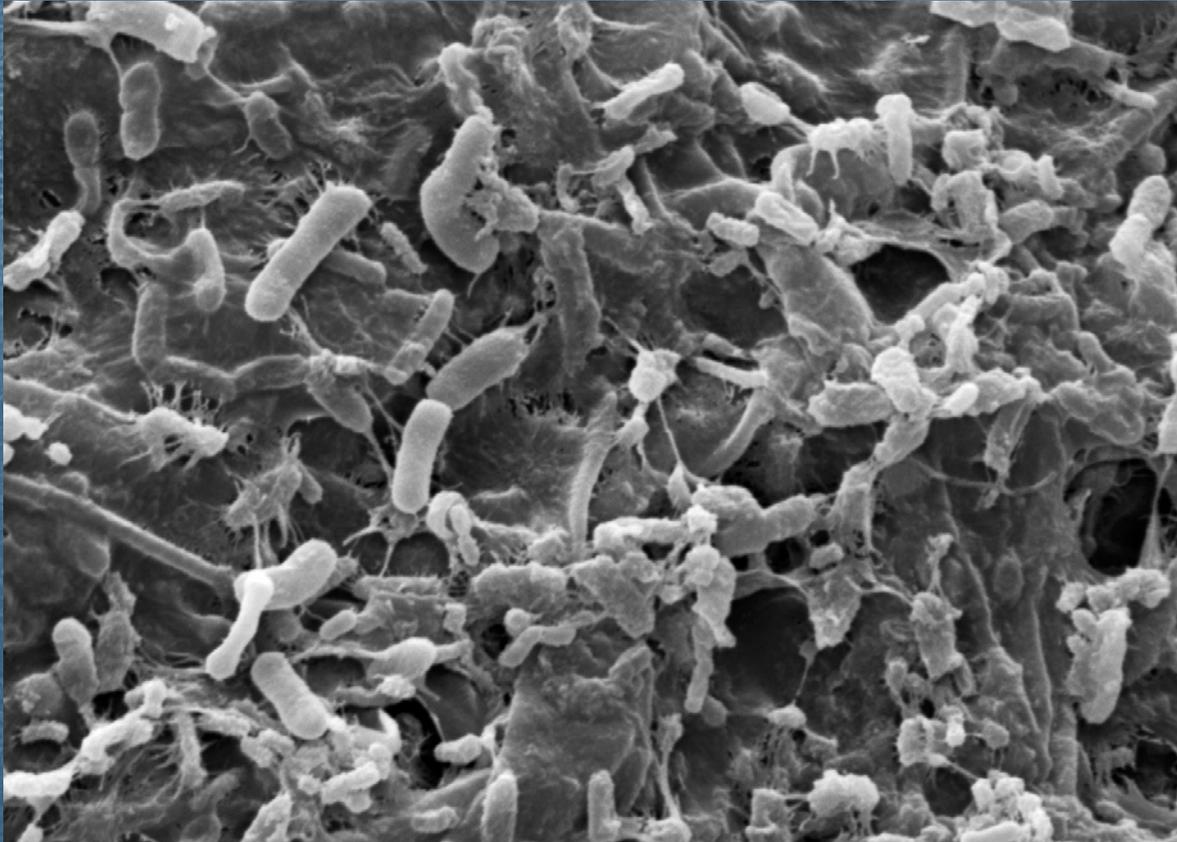
- ▶ It is an efficient way to break down organic materials into a beneficial product.
- ▶ Perhaps your property produce a lot of plant matter. (Leaves-Grass Clippings-Garden Residue)
- ▶ Most economical way to eliminate waste.
  - ▶ Hauling is expensive....
  - ▶ Nutrients are leaving your property...

# Keys to Successful Composting

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- ▶ Aeration
- ▶ Moisture
- ▶ Particle Size
- ▶ Turning or Mixing

# Aeration



Microbes must have Oxygen in order to break down organic matter efficiently.

# Moisture



Moisture  
should  
be about  
50%.

# Particle Size



Less than 2  
inches in  
diameter.  
Chip tree  
limbs/logs

# Nutrients: Carbon-to-Nitrogen Ratio



Ideal  
ratio is  
30:1

# Turning or Mixing

Manual



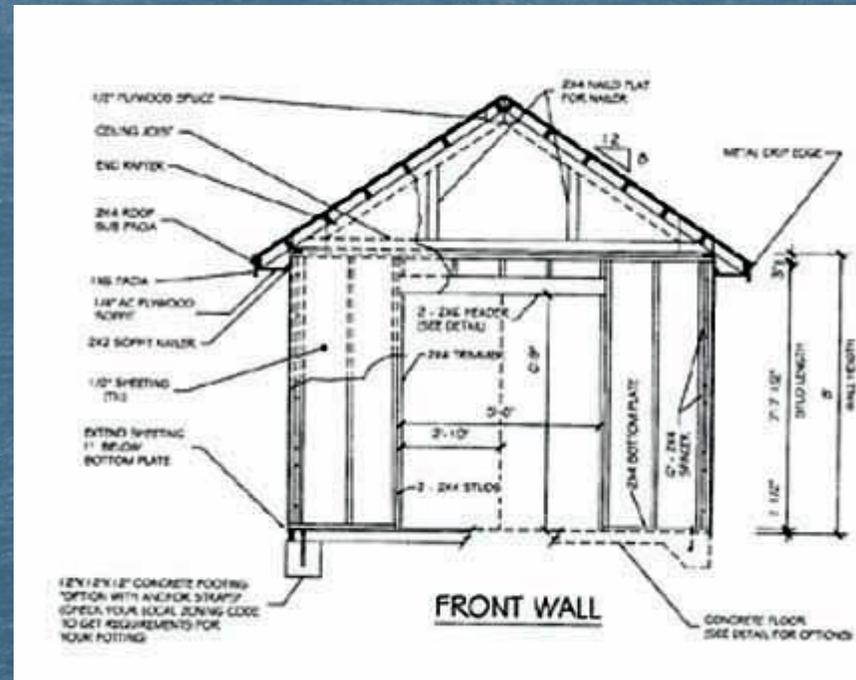
Mechanized



# Composting Structures

## Material List:

(4) 2x6x8  
yellow pine  
(1) 1 5/8  
pipe



# Barrel or Drum

Advantage:  
mixing or  
turning

Disadvantage:  
small capacity



Bin

Disadvan  
tage:  
mixing  
and  
turning



# Multi-Chamber

Advantage:  
multiple batches  
@ varying stages

Disadvantage:  
cost of  
construction/maint.



# Questions & Discussion

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