

TIP O' THE MONTH

Making Nutrient-Rich Soil

By Amy Snyder

Compost heaps work by generating intense heat and biological activity to break down organic material into a rich soil amendment. To expedite this naturally occurring decomposition process, follow the steps below.

1. Create a compost area. This can be a remote corner of your grounds or a self-made bin. (For more information on composters and composting supplies, call the American Horticultural Society at 1-800-777-7931.)

2. Gather organic material; add in formula. The three-layer formula consists of leaves and grass clippings (this layer approximately four to six inches deep), one inch of soil, and a handful of nitrogen fertilizer. Repeat layers to a three-foot level until the compost bin or area is filled. (Other



Ken Graves displays rich soil he made from green waste. Photo courtesy: Ken Graves.

plant debris and even kitchen waste can also be added to speed up decomposition, but should be shredded into pieces no larger than three-quarters of an inch.)

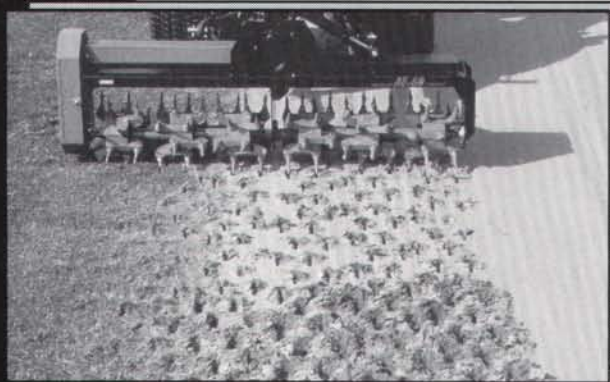
3. Add water and stir. The pile should be kept moist (much like a wrung-out sponge) and should be turned weekly to add oxygen.

The heat in the center of a compost pile can reach 150-200 degrees as microorganisms break down matter. After three to six months, the heap will become dark and crumbly, signaling that it is ready for use. □

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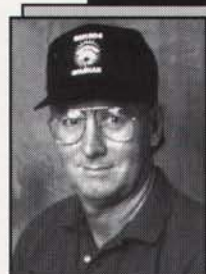
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