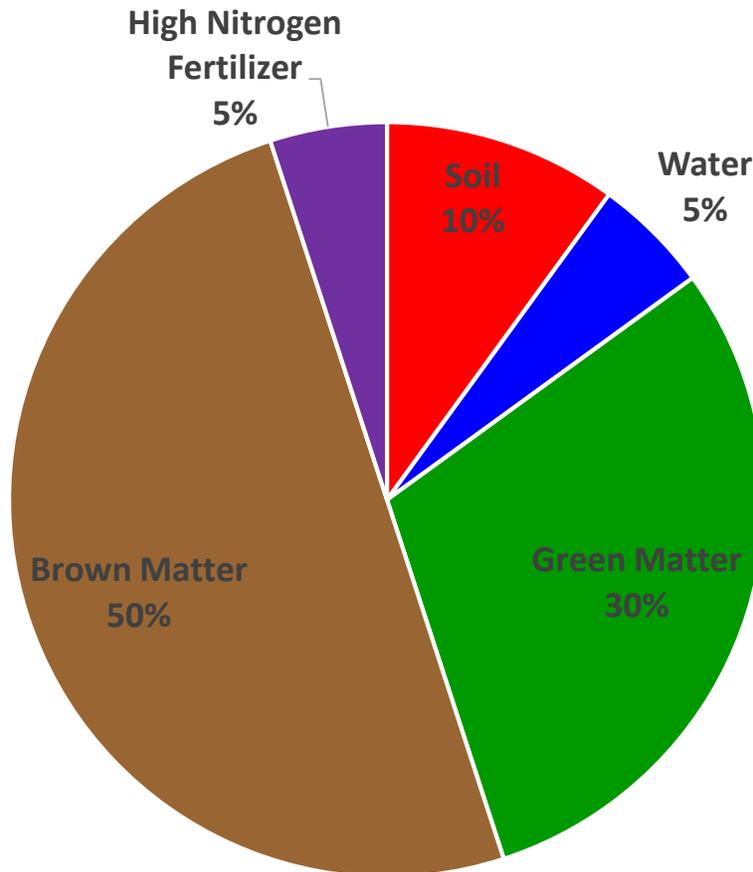




SHAWNEE COUNTY EXTENSION MASTER GARDENERS

COMPOST—WHAT GOES IN



Soil

Adding soil helps your bin retain moisture and introduces soil microbes. It's also a good idea to allow your bin to have contact with your soil through the bottom of the compost bin. This allows easy access for insects and soil microbes.

Water

Your compost bin should be as damp as a wet sponge. An overly wet compost bin can cause a bad smell and slow the composting process. A dish-shaped pile allows rainwater to soak in, rather than run off a pile. If an excessively rainy period is slowing down the composting process, you may want to put a tarp over your compost bin until the rain stops.

Green Matter

Grass clippings, flowers and foliage, vegetable and fruit scraps, coffee grounds with filters, tea bags and manure. Manure should not come from dogs or cats as they carry diseases to which humans are susceptible. Yard waste with pests or diseases should not be used nor should weed materials when seeds are present unless your pile reaches 150-160 degrees Fahrenheit for the majority of the composting process.

Brown Matter

Fallen leaves, small twigs, straw, wood chips, newspaper, sawdust and egg shells. Newspaper should be shredded and moistened. Large branches or pieces of wood will take a significant amount of time to break down. You may also add wood ashes as brown matter but ashes raise soil pH so a soil test should be performed more frequently when ashes are used. Meat should never be added to a compost pile.

High Nitrogen Fertilizer

Fertilizer helps to feed soil microbes and speed up the composting process.

Finishing Your Pile

True composting involves regularly turning the pile and taking the internal temperature with a compost thermometer. Compost piles that reach temperatures between 150-160 degrees Fahrenheit can kill most plant disease and weed seeds. Once the temperature of the pile cools and the pile has decreased in size, the process is complete.

K-STATE
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Master Gardener
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