

RECYCLING THE GARDEN'S ORGANIC WASTE

Instead of using chemical fertilizers to improve the quality of the soil, the responsible gardener will use any available waste organic matter to make good compost. This diagram shows the seven main stages involved in building a compost heap.

1. COLLECTING MATERIAL



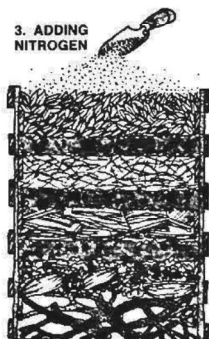
Most organic matter can be used in a compost heap: the more water the organic matter contains, the faster it will decay.

2. ALLOWING AIR TO CIRCULATE



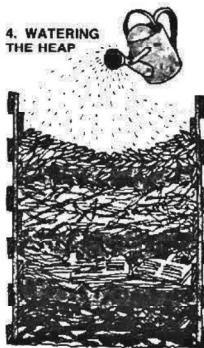
Building in layers allows air to circulate. Start with branches and twigs, then alternate different ingredients in 6-inch layers.

3. ADDING NITROGEN



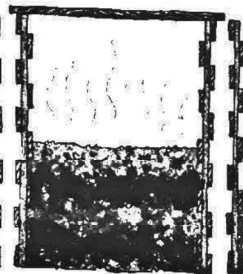
Sprinkle the heap with a thin dusting of some highly nitrogenous substance, such as manure or hoof and horn meal.

4. WATERING THE HEAP



If the weather is dry, moisten the heap by sprinkling lightly with water. This can be done with each layer if the material is very dry.

5. RETAINING HEAT



Once the heap is built, cover it with a layer of earth and a lid of some sort to keep the heat in and speed up the rotting process.

6. ROTTING DOWN



Depending on the time of year and the weather, a 5-foot high heap will take between 3 and 6 months to rot down.

7. APPLYING THE COMPOST



Compost can be applied directly to the soil or dug in, depending on the time of year.