

## Utilizing your soil

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Compost should be looked at as a fertilizer, not as much of a soil medium itself. It is useful to add to existing beds and you can allow the plants to obtain the nutrients that they need.

More questions about gardening?  
Check out the NIU  
Communiversiy Gardens



## NIU Communiversiy Gardens

**Location: Behind Anderson Hall**

The NIU Communiversiy Gardens were created to engage students and the surrounding community in building unified relationships through education and cultivation of sustainable food production.

Come on out and get your grow on!

Email: [niucg1@gmail.com](mailto:niucg1@gmail.com)

Find us on Facebook!

## Composting within your garden

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## How to build, and utilize a compost system

## Helpful tips / tricks



Composting can be a useful way to turn garden waste back into soil

### Benefits of composting

Free Fertilizer! – Composting can be utilized as a fertilizer for your garden, so you save money that you would be spending on fertilizers

Reducing landfill waste- composting allows you to turn many different things that you could throw away back into something useful for your garden

Mother Nature approved – Most things involved with composting allows you to have a more positive impact on the environment, so even if it seems simple, it can add up over time!

More of a closed loop for your garden – composting allows you to utilize your garden waste right where it came from. It helps connect the waste of the garden with the input of necessary nutrients

### Starting/ maintaining your system

Plan your system – where do you think potential smell won't be noticed, will it be close to a "natural" area? How much material will you be adding to each bin?

Start your pile on bare earth – this allows all the life within the existing soil to find its way into your compost

Moisture is important – This is important during dry times of the year, because you want there to be enough water for decomposition

Turn your pile! – Turning allows for the overall mixture of material, as well as mixing in oxygen



### Nitrogen / Carbon Ratio

When adding material to be composted, you want to have a good ratio of nitrogen / carbon rich materials

Nitrogen (green stuff)- veggie scraps, grass clippings, weeds, coffee grounds

Carbon – (brown stuff) cardboard, newspaper, straw, wood chips, leaves, wood ash

1/3 green to 2/3 brown will allow for the appropriate nutrients in the soil/ decomposition

*Things to keep in mind:*

*Bugs are ok! – They are necessary for the breakdown of material*

*Steam is ok! – Steam is a natural product of decomposition, so your pile might get hot*

*Keep in mind the carbon / nitrogen ratio*