Compost problems?
Most common problems will be solved by adding brown materials, which will balance moisture, eliminate odour, and discourage flies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bin has a bad odour.</td>
<td>Not enough air; pile is too wet</td>
<td>Turn pile. Add coarse, dry materials such a straw or cornstalks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pile is dry throughout.</td>
<td>Not enough water. Too much woody material.</td>
<td>Turn and moisten materials. Add fresh waste. Cover pile to reduce evaporation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compost material is damp and warm only in the middle.</td>
<td>Not enough material in the bin.</td>
<td>Collect more material and mix the new ingredients into the old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material is damp and sweet-smelling, but not heating up.</td>
<td>Lack of nitrogen.</td>
<td>Mix in a nitrogen-rich (green) material such as fresh grass clippings, fresh manure, or blood meal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pests around bin (dogs, rodents, insects).</td>
<td>Improper food trimmings added, or materials not covered well enough.</td>
<td>Do not add meat, fats, bones or animal waste. Use a rodent-resistant compost bin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flies at compost bin.</td>
<td>Food scraps not covered. Not enough brown material.</td>
<td>Put fruit and vegetable scraps in centre of bin; cover with soil or brown material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit flies in kitchen.</td>
<td>Scraps are attracting fruit flies.</td>
<td>Keep kitchen scrap collection pail in the refrigerator or freezer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions?
Call the Regional Compost Hotline at 604-736-2250.

How to use your compost:
- **Feed your lawn:** Rake a layer of compost on to your lawn, about 5 mm (¾”) thick.
- **Use it in your garden:** Spread it around the base of shrubs, trees and perennials.
- **Make potting soil:** 1/3 sifted compost 1/3 soil 1/3 vermiculite
- **Have a small garden?** Share it with your neighbours or the garden in your complex.

Composting replicates nature’s way of breaking down vegetation using worms, good bacteria, and other organisms.

**Five great reasons to compost**

1. **Reduce your garbage**
   Organic waste (such as kitchen vegetable scraps and garden clippings) make up 30% per cent of the household garbage currently being sent to the landfill. Composting your organic waste is a great way to reduce this volume.

2. **It’s easy**
   Setting up a compost in your household is simple and inexpensive. Everyone in the home can participate and feel good about making a difference.

3. **Help the environment**
   Less waste means less trucks on the road, less methane gas generated from the landfills, and recycling nutrients back into the earth.

4. **Improve your garden**
   Your compost will help your garden soil retain moisture after rain or watering.

5. **Reduce use of chemical fertilizers**
   Keep local waterways clean by avoiding chemical fertilizers. Composting returns nutrients to the garden.

Here’s the Dirt:
**Backyard Composting**

Find out how easy it is—we can show you how!

A simple, inexpensive way to reduce your garbage and make great soil for your garden.

This publication is available online as a PDF search for *Backyard Composting* or its partner brochure, *Worm Composting*, at www.metrovancouver.org

For copies contact the Metro Vancouver Information Centre at 604-432-6200 or email icentre@metrovancouver.org
Backyard Composting: 10 easy steps

1. **Choose** a flat, partly-sunny area with good drainage.
2. **Purchase a bin** from your municipality or a store or build your own rodent-proof compost bin. Keeping a lid on your bin will help keep out rain and rodents.
   **tip:** The ideal compost bin size is one cubic metre in order to retain the heat it generates.
3. **Create a 6–10cm base layer** using straw, leaves, or woody brushy material to promote air circulation.
4. **Alternate layers** of green (nitrogen-rich) and brown (carbon-rich) materials. See the chart for a list of acceptable and unacceptable materials.
   **tip:** Chop up large materials for faster decomposition.
5. **Whenever you add a food scrap layer,** top it off with a layer of brown material (5–8cm).
   If you only use kitchen scraps (green material), your compost will likely be wet and break down more slowly.
   **tip:** In the fall, collect dry leaves into an old garbage container so that you can use them year-round.
6. **Mix bin contents** every week or two. This aerates the materials and gets the bin heating up again, allowing them to decompose faster. Purchase an aerator tool or use an old ski pole or broom handle.
7. **Moisture content** of the bin should be like a wrung-out dishrag. Only add water if it is very dry after mixing.
   **tip:** To maintain proper moisture content, balance the amount of green and brown materials.
8. **Pile will shrink.** Continue to add layers of green and brown materials until bin is almost full.
9. **Compost is generally ready to use** after about 2–3 months; however, aging the compost for another 1–2 months is recommended.
   **tip:** If you have room, set up two composters so you can add to one bin as the other one matures.
10. **Harvest** your compost when the compost at the bottom and centre is decomposed, full of healthy worms, and moist. Dig out the compost with a shovel, using the door at the bottom of a commercial bin; or if you have built your own, remove the top new layers and dig the compost from the centre.
   **tip:** You may choose to sift your compost through a mesh screen to remove large chunks or unfinished material.

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### What to compost:

**Green material (nitrogen-rich)**
- Kitchen scraps
- Plant trimmings from your garden
- Grass clippings (fresh)
- Coffee grounds and tea leaves
- Pet manure
- Large leafy weeds
- Rhubarb leaves
- Vegetables and fruit

**Brown material (carbon-rich)**
- Leaves
- Newsprint
- Cardboard
- Corn cobs, corn stalks
- Brown paper bags
- Grass clippings (dry)
- Straw
- Paper towels and napkins

**Other acceptable materials**
- Eggshells
- Wood ash from a fireplace

**Unacceptable materials**
- Grease, cooked food including rice or pasta, oils
- Fish, meat, bones
- Dog or cat feces*
- Kitty litter
- Barbecue ash, coal

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* Note: Dog feces can be composted in a separate container, keeping it out of the garbage. Curious? See the Metro Vancouver website for tips.