

HRMC Spring Compost Bin Sale

Spring will be here before you know it and it's time to start thinking about backyard composting. To get you started or to expand your existing home compost system, the Hilltown Resource Management Cooperative (HRMC) will be taking orders for the Orbis "Earth Machine" home compost bins.

The bins that are rodent resistant feature a door at the bottom that can be opened to remove finished compost.

HRMC member-Towns can purchase the bins for \$25 due to a subsidy pricing incentive from the Towns. To reserve your bin, email HRMC with your name, residential address, and phone number (email: hrmc@hrmc.ma.org). Orders are due by March 11th. Payment for the bin is due at the time of your scheduled pick up by check made payable to HRMC. Spring distribution is planned for April.

The HRMC also sells "Sure-Close" kitchen compost collection pails for \$5. This 2-gallon pail sits on the countertop or under the sink to collect compostable scraps before taking them out to the home compost bin. The pinholes in the lid allow moisture to evaporate, which reduces odor.

Home Composting Basics

In the kitchen, collect fruit and vegetable scraps and peels, eggshells, coffee grounds and paper filters, stale bread and leftover grains. Do not put the following materials in home compost bins or piles: pet waste, meat, bones, poultry, fish, dairy and oily foods such as peanut butter and salad dressing.

When adding kitchen scraps to outdoor compost bins, cover the scraps with leaves, finished compost or other carbon-rich materials. Covering the kitchen scraps reduces insects and odor, while also speeding up the composting process.

Ideally, a home compost bin should contain about 75 percent "brown" carbon-rich materials like fall leaves, straw, used paper towels, ripped up egg cartons, paper bags or newspaper; and 25 percent "green" nitrogen-rich materials such as food waste, coffee grounds and grass clippings.

The composting process needs oxygen; mixing or "turning" the pile every few weeks with a shovel or pitchfork will speed up the composting process. Introduce helpful microorganisms to your bin by adding a few shovelfuls of garden soil or finished compost. Add water occasionally to make the contents as damp as a wrung-out sponge. Compost is ready to use when it looks like crumbly, dark brown, sweet-smelling soil.

Why Compost?

You may be surprised to know that food waste comprises about 22% of what we dispose of in Massachusetts. Food is the number one materials in both residential and commercial trash. This food waste costs a lot of money to handle in the trash because the organic material is heavy and the price that we pay for trash disposal is

\$\$\$ /ton. Also, food that is being placed in the trash is a missed opportunity for creating soil amendments created through composting.

In Massachusetts, we are striving to cut back on wasted food. MADEP has a statewide commercial organics waste ban. To that end, businesses are partnering with food rescue organizations that saves food that will not be sold or otherwise used and to redistribute it to people in need. To reduce food scraps, businesses are sending them to commercial composting sites, anaerobic digestion facilities, or animal feed operations.

On a personal level, Massachusetts's residents generate about 150 pounds of food waste per person. To reduce this food waste at home: be mindful of the amount of food you need for your meals, store your food so that it lasts longer, and compost at home. MADEP advises that home composting has a significant impact on minimizing our carbon footprint because it doesn't require transportation of the food waste.

For more information on composting and a graphic of the Orbis Earth Machine, visit the HRMC and member-Town websites.

HRMC member-Towns include: Ashfield, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Plainfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, and Worthington.