

NEWS RELEASE
Gregg Eyestone
110 Courthouse Plaza
Manhattan, KS 66502-0111

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Phone: 785-537-6350
FAX: 785-537-6353

Composting Tree Leaves

Tree leaves in the fall often precipitates forming a compost pile. I prefer to chop my leaves up with the mower and leave them where they lay. Composting is another option which is pretty easy. It is the mix of browns like tree leaves and greens such as kitchen fruit and vegetable scraps. Soil or finished compost is added to supply the microorganisms that will breakdown the raw ingredients.

Our pile is a slow composter. That means that the raw materials are dumped as needed. There is no concern with layers of browns and greens in any orderly manner. The pile dries out between rains. Occasionally, the pile will get turned. Speeding up the process would mean keeping the pile evenly moist and turning.

A compost pile is necessary for those on a septic system. We divert items going down the garbage disposal which fills up the septic tank. These products are fine for the septic system. It just needs pumped out sooner.

Many items besides salad scrapes go into the pile. Newsprint, leaves, sawdust, dead potted plants, cardboard and acorns are a few items that have been added over the years. Sometimes the fire place ashes are added. Another use of ashes is to inhibit plant growth such as under a fence.

Construction of a compost bin can vary from the elaborate to the simple. We chose the simple by using some cement blocks that we already had. The inside diameter is 5 feet by 5 feet by 4 feet tall. Wood pallets make a good size compost pile. They are

often available for free from the Manhattan Mercury. Attractive commercial bins are also available.

Compost can be made slowly or with some effort sped up. It just depends on the composter. To learn more about composting, you can stop-by your local Extension office. A publication on “Making and Using Compost at Home” is available on the web at www.ksre.k-state.edu.

Just like gardening, people have their own techniques of composting. In the end, it all decomposes and is good for mixing in with our Kansas soils.

You can find out more information on this and other horticulture topics by going to the Riley County, K-State Research and Extension website at www.riley.ksu.edu. Gregg may be contacted by calling 785-537-6350 or stopping by 110 Courthouse Plaza in Manhattan or e-mail: geyeston@ksu.edu.