

Composting Methods



There are many ways to compost your food scraps both inside and outside! SCR teaches classes on all of the below methods. Take a look at three of the leading composting methods:

1. Pile/(Three)Bin System

Pile composting comes in many shapes and forms. At the Sustainable Living Center (SLC), we use a three bin system (top photo) and a Geobin system (second photo from top). There are other systems, like the Earth Machine (third photo from top), as well!

Pile systems are methods of composting in which your compost ingredients go into one space and are managed within that space through turning, watering, and monitoring. Pile systems are great if you have **outdoor space**, and especially great for processing a **moderate to high volume** of food and garden material.

You can pile compost in a freeform pile, a pile with a three-sided structure, a bin system in which everything is enclosed (typically with wire), or a closed system. These systems are completely customizable to your needs and preferences.

Typically, a multiple bin system has three bins, one for active use, one for curing, and one for storing finished compost. We use this type at the SLC because of the high volume of food scraps we compost. Pile systems need to be about 3'x3'x3' in order to cook and cure properly. Volume is a key consideration for pile systems.



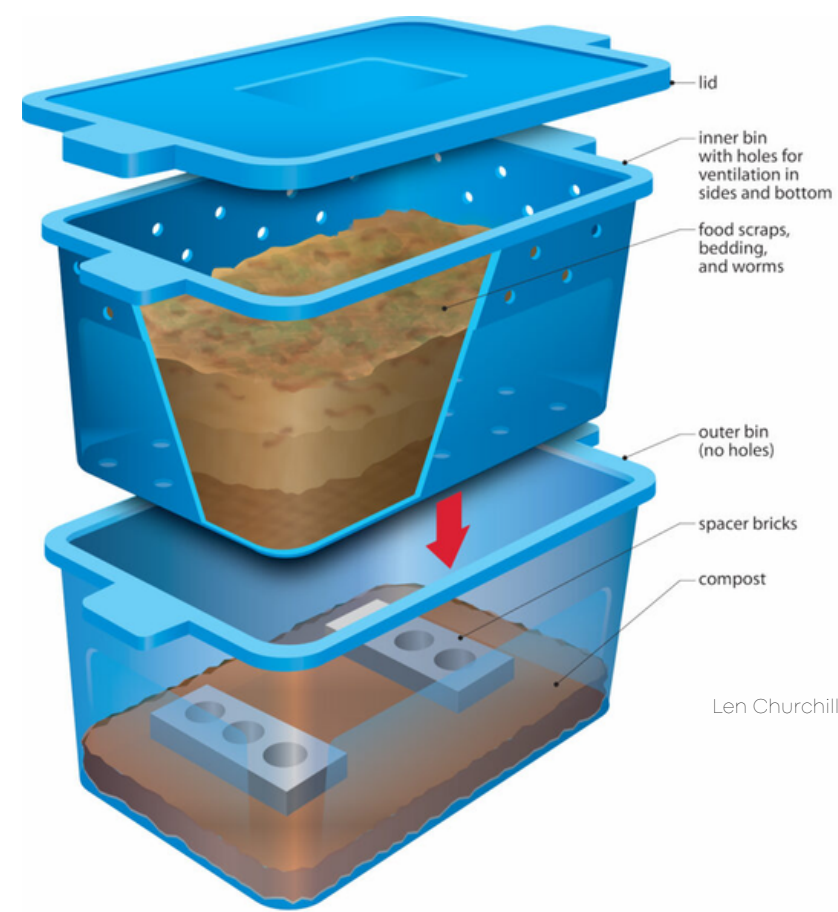
2. Vermicomposting

We love worms! Vermicomposting is a wonderful option for **indoor composting**. Worm bins can be bought or created at very little cost right at home. Vermicomposting bins can be very **small and discreet** and not only create "black gold" worm casting compost, but also vermicompost "tea", a potent and nutritious fertilizer.

The bins are so discreet, in fact, that local schools keep them in their classrooms, and we keep them in our office!

These systems are typically a **bin-within-a-bin system**, with the inner bin having holes on the bottom to allow for drainage and the outer bin having holes on top for oxygen. Worms can be a bit pickier than a pile system but you can't beat their small and **easy to manage** system!

Feeding the worms in batches once a week, chopping the food into small pieces, and monitoring it weekly will be enough to process **small to moderate** amounts of food material.



3. Bokashi Composting

Bokashi composting is another great method for indoor composting. Bokashi is a Japanese-derived method of **fermentation**, breaking down the structures of the food material, making it a great first step in the composting process. Bokashi systems are able to process things that other systems can't like **fats and meat** using inoculated bran material.

Bokashi composting takes about two weeks to process, and having two systems is imperative for continuous fermentation. These systems can be homemade using two 5-gallon buckets, with holes drilled in the inner bucket to allow for drainage of compost "tea".

When the process is complete, the end product must be either buried in a garden bed or further composted in a pile system to fully break down. Bokashi also produces a compost "tea" which is highly potent but a fantastic fertilizer for house plants and gardens alike!

