

Wellness Wednesday



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Experts Say You're Probably Making These 5 Common Compost Mistakes *Fruits, vegetables and... hair? Find out what you should and shouldn't be composting.*

Composting has been around since the beginning of time, but the climate crisis has driven up interest in turning waste into fertilizer in recent decades. While some people do their own composting, others take advantage of weekly compost pickups provided by their cities or towns, or visit bins at their local farmers market to drop off their compostable waste.

Composting reduces waste and lowers greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 50%, making it an important action step in the fight against climate change. Unfortunately, composting can be incredibly confusing for beginners. What can you compost, and what can't you compost? Does "biodegradable" mean compostable? What kind of bin do you need? If you're not doing it right, you could be wasting a lot of time and energy without even making a positive impact. Here are the most common mistakes sustainability experts see composting novices making.

Giving Up Too Quickly

Mark Driscoll, a sustainability expert and founder of the sustainable food systems consultancy Tasting the Future, is the first to admit that composting is an art, especially if you're composting in your own backyard or even saving up compost throughout the week. "People give up too early when things go wrong," he said. "For example, people often fail to get the right mix of green and brown material within their compost bins/heap. Unless your grass clippings are mixed with brown material, it will turn into sticky, smelly sludge."

He explained that "greens" are things like grass clippings, uncooked kitchen waste, fruit and vegetable peelings and leafy plants. "Browns," on the other hand, include items like hedge clippings, wood chips, leaves, plant stems, paper (including shredded paper), cards and paper straws, wooden egg boxes and paper-based tea bags.

Abby K. Cannon, a registered dietitian who lives an eco-friendly lifestyle, admitted that there is a bit of a learning curve when it comes to composting. "But once you get the hang of composting, which doesn't take very long to do, it becomes second nature and you'll wonder why you didn't start sooner," she said.



Not Knowing What You Can Compost

Most people know you can compost fruits and vegetables. But according to Cannon, there are plenty of other little-known waste items that should go in the compost bin, not the trash. "You can actually compost your own hair and nail clippings," she said. Gross? Yes. Great information? Also yes.

Driscoll added that you can compost pet hair, among other surprising items: "You can compost coffee grounds and tea bags (be careful, though, as some tea bags are made from plastic and should be avoided), natural loofahs, cotton balls and cotton T-shirts that are made from 100% cotton without added synthetics, old wool clothing (preferably with natural dyes) with any zips, buttons or fasteners removed, the inner tube of toilet rolls and small amounts of shredded cardboard" with any tape removed.

And perhaps most surprising, Driscoll said you can actually compost human urine. "For men, peeing on your compost can add high levels of nitrogen or phosphorus, although you'll need a secluded garden for this."

Not Knowing What You Can't Compost

Just as important as understanding what you can compost is understanding what you can't compost. Both Driscoll and Cannon note that you cannot compost meat, as this will create a smelly compost pile and probably attract vermin, and, although eggshells are fine to compost, eggs are not.

Driscoll said many people take the "biodegradable" label on plastic bags to mean "compostable." "Just because they are biodegradable does not mean they are compostable," he said. "Biodegradable plastics can leave a toxic residue, while compostable plastics break down into water, carbon and biomass that can produce nutrients for plants."

In a similar vein, Cannon said that if you have a backyard compost, you may not be able to compost packaging that says "compostable" on it. "You have to make sure that it's backyard compostable, not commercially compostable," she said. "If something is labeled commercially compostable, it's not suitable for your backyard compost, unfortunately."

Not Turning Your Compost Regularly Enough

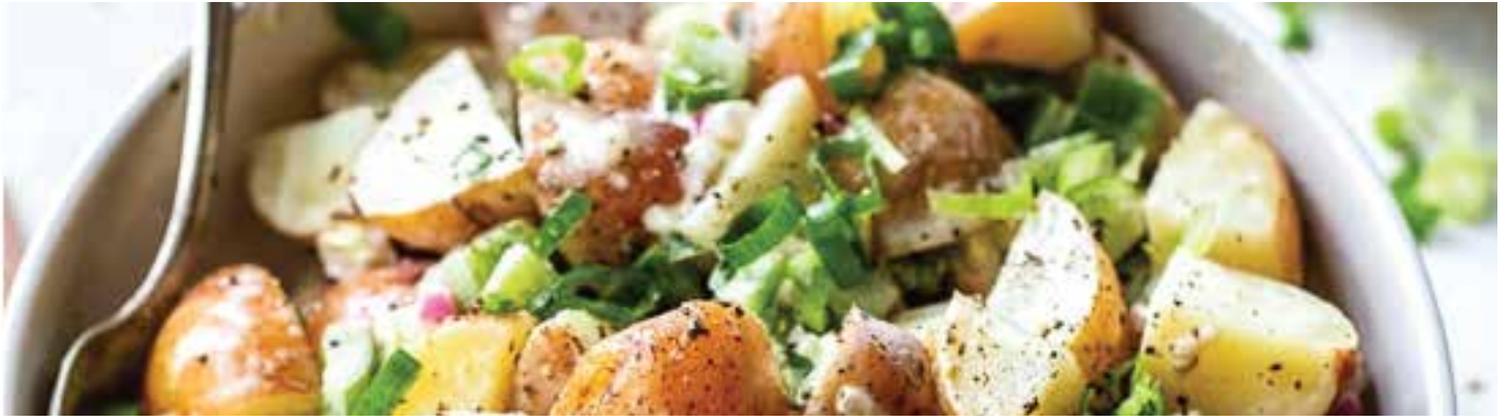
Whether you're composting in your own backyard or saving up compost in a bin throughout the week, it's important to turn your compost every three to four days. But many people forget to do this. "I'm totally guilty of this myself," Cannon admitted.

Driscoll explained that turning your compost regularly actually speeds up the composting process, which is especially convenient when you're building your own backyard compost. "You can either use a rotating compost bin or turn it by hand," he said. "Turning adds air that speeds up the composting process."

Using Compost As Your Main Source Of Discarding Food Waste

While composting is an excellent way to reduce food waste and lower greenhouse gas emissions, if you find your compost pile getting unwieldy, it's worth it to consider other ways to reduce food waste. "Vegetable scraps can be used to make broth, nut milk can be made from leftover nut pulp and stale bread can be transformed into croutons or breadcrumbs," plant-based chef Matthew Kenney said. "By getting creative and using all parts of our food, we can reduce our environmental impact and enjoy delicious meals at the same time."

There's no doubt that composting requires some patience, but as with anything, it will become easier the more you do it. And sustainability experts will be the first to tell you the environmental payoff is well worth it.



RED POTATO SALAD

107 Calories | Prep: 15 mins | Cook: 10 mins | Total: 25 mins
YIELD: 6 servings | Course: Salad, Side Dish | Cuisine: American



INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups baby red potatoes, cut in small pieces
- 1/2 cup green bell pepper, finely diced
- 4-5 strips of turkey bacon
- 1/4 cup red onion, finely diced
- 3 scallions, diced
- 1 1/2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon reduced fat mayonnaise
- kosher salt and fresh pepper, to taste

Variations

- If you can't find baby red potatoes, use larger red skin potatoes, russet potato or yukon gold potatoes cut in bite-sized pieces.
- Swap the red onion for shallots.
- Add fresh herbs like dill or chives.
- If you want to omit the mayo, swap it with full fat Greek yogurt.

This easy Baby Red Potato Salad recipe is light on the mayonnaise. A delicious BBQ side dish you will make all summer!

I love a good homemade potato salad, and this one is absolutely delicious, especially if you're not a fan of traditional potato salad loaded with mayonnaise. It uses just one tablespoon of mayo but still has plenty of sauce from the Dijon mustard, olive oil, and red wine vinegar. And since it uses red potatoes, no need to peel the potatoes so it's quicker too! For more lighter potato salad recipes, try this Rainbow Potato Salad and Summer Potato Salad with Apples.

Nutrition Information

Serving: 3/4 cup, Calories: 107 kcal, Carbohydrates: 17.8 g, Protein: 2.2 g, Fat: 3.2 g, Saturated Fat: 1 g, Fiber: 2.1 g

<https://www.skinnytaste.com/>



INSTRUCTIONS



1. Bring a pot of generously salted water to a boil. Add potatoes and cook until soft, approx 10 minutes. Drain.
2. Meanwhile, spray a large skillet with oil and cook the turkey bacon as directed.
3. While the potatoes are boiling, combine red onion, green pepper, mustard, olive oil, vinegar and mayonnaise and season with salt and pepper.
4. Set aside and spray the skillet with more oil.
5. Once the potatoes are done, toss them into the bowl with dressing and add scallions and additional salt and pepper to taste.
6. Serve room temperature or refrigerate until ready to serve.

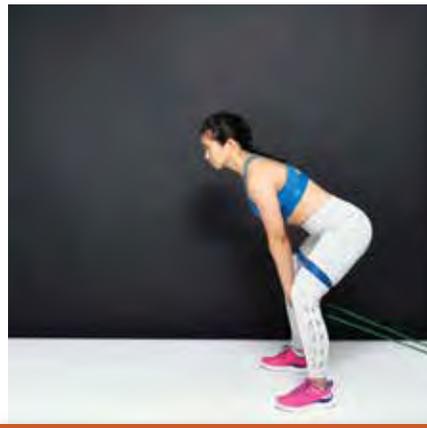
FEATURED EXERCISE

https://www.self.com/gallery/best-hip-strengthening-exercises?ssp_iabi=1682601574859

Featured Exercise ► **Double Banded Pull Through** 

» **Do it:** *If you're someone who spends most days sitting, you're likely familiar with that hip ache and tightness that comes along with it. Strengthening the hip area is something that will not only make you feel better, but help you move better, too.*

- Attach a long resistance band low to the ground behind you. Or, you can also use a cable.
- Stand in front of the band with your feet about shoulder-width apart with a looped mini resistance band just above your knees. Push your legs apart slightly to actively maintain tension in the band and prevent your knees from caving in.
- Hinge forward at the hips and push your butt back as you bend your knees to reach down and grab the long band between your legs. You should feel a stretch in your hamstrings and glutes.
- Keep your chest lifted and back flat as you stand back up, driving your hips forward and squeezing your glutes at the top. That's 1 rep.
- Do 12-15 reps.



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Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



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DON'T THINK ABOUT WHAT CAN HAPPEN IN A MONTH. DON'T THINK ABOUT WHAT CAN HAPPEN IN A YEAR. JUST FOCUS ON THE 24 HOURS IN FRONT OF YOU AND DO WHAT YOU CAN TO GET CLOSER TO WHERE YOU WANT TO BE.