



# COMPOSTING IS GOOD FOR WATER QUALITY!

**People don't normally associate composting and water quality, but there are two major reasons why composting is good for water quality:**

- It keeps leaves and yard debris out of the storm drains.
- It keeps fruits and vegetable waste from clogging up sewer pipes, which lead to sanitary sewer overflows.

Materials such as leaves, branches and fallen trees are natural in all streams and creeks and even provide important aquatic habitat. However, like most things, you can have too much of a good thing. During the fall season, large piles of leaves on the street are easily washed away into storm drains. Leaves and other debris clog up the storm drain pipes and contribute to localized flooding. Additionally, an excess of natural materials, such as leaves, in the water can lead to low oxygen levels. The decomposition process of the materials requires oxygen and in an already oxygen depleted body of water such as Gills Creek, this could be detrimental to aquatic health.



The best option is to **Leave Your Leaves!** They are nature's fertilizer and they're meant to be on the ground. If that is not a viable option for you, the next best thing is to compost them in a compost bin (information on how to compost in the links below). If composting is also not an option, put them on the curb as far away from a storm drain or storm water conveyance as possible. If you live in the City of Columbia, they will go to the City's compost facility, so make sure no trash gets mixed into the leaves.



Aside from leaves, fruit and vegetable waste are a crucial piece of the compost mixture. Many of us do not think twice about using garbage disposals, and may even consider them a good alternative to adding to the landfill. But, did you know that 65% of the Sanitary Sewer Overflows in the City of Columbia (raw sewage flowing from a manhole or pipe) are caused by clogged pipes. And of those, over 90% are from residential homes. Any amount of oil, grease, or fats (cream, cheese, meat, etc) will congeal and clog up in the pipes. When one uses a garbage disposal, those ground up fruit and vegetable waste stick to the congealed mixture and the pipe clogs up even faster. Composting and keeping all fats, oils, and grease out of your kitchen sink is a great solution to this problem.

Save up those fruits and vegetable waste in a container, such as the one shown, and then add them to your compost pile.

### Benefits of Composting

- Protecting water quality
- Saving space in the landfill
- Creating a product that you can use
- Saving taxpayer money by reducing the amount of clogged storm drains and sewer pipes

## **CITY OF COLUMBIA COMPOST FACILITY**

City ordinance requires homeowners to separate their vegetation (yard trash) from other debris, such as broken lawn equipment, old furniture, etc. The vegetation is then diverted to our composting operation. The remaining debris goes to the inert landfill. Two separate trucks collect the material: one for vegetation and one for trash. The composting operation receives nearly 25 percent of the city's total trash tonnage. The compost is available to citizens for \$20 per cu yd or \$30 per cu yd loaded. The facility is located in Columbia across from the Animal Shelter on Humane Lane off Shop Road and is open 8:30am-4:30pm M-F.

**Do not put pet waste into compost! Do not place dog poop bags in your or anyone else's yard trash! Poop bags must be placed in the green roll cart household garbage for disposal in the landfill.**

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### **For information on how to compost see:**

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control [Compost it. Don't waste it.](#)

(See linked brochure Composting: Recycling Naturally)

### **For additional information about recycling see:**

[City of Columbia Solid Waste](#) - Info on recycling, e-waste recycling, roll cart and trash pick up, and the compost facility.

[Grinding of the Greens](#) - Info on Christmas tree recycling