Build your own compost bin

For compost to happen it requires a minimum cubic space of 3'x3'. Here are some basic instructions for constructing your own outdoor compost bins.

One or two bin backyard compost bin

These instructions are for a one-bin backyard compost system. You can attach a second bin or create two stand alone systems. A two-bin system allows you to alternate your compost from year to year.

Materials for one bin (double for two)

- 1 roll hardwire cloth 3/8" – 1/2" wide.
- 14 -1" x 5" wood (untreated) or plastic lumber; cut in 36" lengths.
- 4 – 4" x 4"wooden posts; cut in 42" lengths
- 8 – 2" x 2" lumber; cut in 42" lengths
- 4 – 2" x 2" lumber; cut in 25" lengths
- 4 – 2" x 2" lumber, cut in 17" lengths
- 4 – hook and eye hardware
- 4 – strap hinges, approx. 1" x 2"
- wood screws

Tools

- Work gloves
- Heavy-duty wire or tin snips
- Staple gun
- Hammer
- drill

Construction

1. Locate site for compost bin. Prepare area and clear out any material unneeded for construction.
2. Construct 2 wooden sides using 7 - 1" x 5"s for each side. Secure 1" x 5"s to the 4" square posts, leaving ½" gap between lumber.
3. Create 2 frame bases using 2" x 2"lumber; measuring 25" high x 42" long. Cut hardwire cloth and staple to frame.
4. Attach hardwire cloth frames to bottom of 4" square posts. Face the hardwire cloth on the inside before securing.
5. Attach strap hinges to upper edge of hardwire frame.
6. Create two top frames using 2" x 2" lumber, measuring 17" high x 42" long. Cut hard wire cloth and staple to frame.
7. Place frame (hardwire cloth facing 4" posts) on top of base hardwire frame and attach strap hinges to top frame.
8. Attach eye and hook hardware on top from frame and 4" Posts.

Note: An alternate to this is to wire 4 pallets together to make a square, stabilizing it with re-rod posts.

Wire-mesh compost bin

A wire-mesh compost bin is inexpensive and easy to build. It can be made from galvanized chicken wire (un-galvanized wire will not last long) or hardware cloth. The wire mesh bin also provides for easy turning of the organic materials. Simply lift the wire, set it to the side, and use a garden fork or shovel to scoop the organics back into the pile while harvesting finished compost from the bottom.

Materials

- 10' length of 36" wide 1" galvanized chicken wire or 10' length of ½" wide hardware cloth.
- Baling wire (18-20 gage) for ties
- 3-4 wooden or metal posts; 4' tall.

Tools

- Work gloves
- Heavy-duty wire or tin snips
- Pliers
- Hammer
- Metal file (to remove sharp edges of cut wire)

Chicken wire construction plans

1. Fold back 3" to 4" of wire at each end of cut piece to provide a strong, clean edge that will not poke or snag, and that will be easy to latch.
2. Stand the chicken wire in a circle (3 feet in diameter) and set it in place for the compost pile. ***Tip***: may leave a 2' opening in circle for easier access.
3. Cut the baling wire into lengths for ties. Bind the ends of the chicken wire together with the baling wire ties using pliers.
4. Space wood or metal posts along the inside of the chicken wire circle. Holding the posts tightly against the wire, pound them firmly into the ground to provide support.

Hardware cloth construction plans

1. Trim the ends of the hardware cloth so that the wires are flush with a cross wire to get rid of edges that could poke or scratch hands. Lightly file each wire along the cut edge to ensure safe handling when opening and closing the bin.
2. Bend the hardware cloth into a circle, and stand it in place for the compost pile. ***Tip***: may leave a 2' opening in circle for easier access.
3. Cut the baling wire into lengths for ties. Bind the ends of the hardware cloth together with baling wire ties using pliers.