

What is a Watershed?

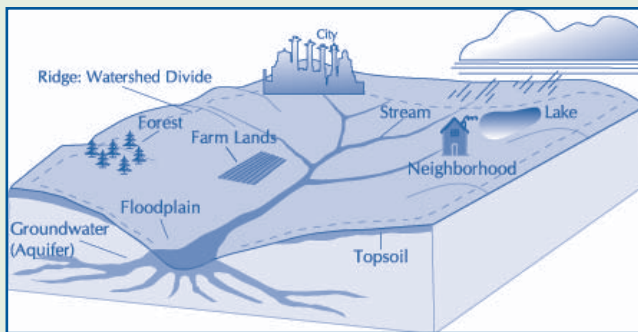
A watershed is an area of land that drains to a common point, such as a nearby creek, stream, river or lake. Every small watershed drains to a larger watershed that eventually flows to the ocean.

Watersheds support a wide variety of plants and wildlife and provide many outdoor recreation opportunities. Protecting the health of our watersheds preserves and enhances the quality of life for Kansas City area residents.

What is Stormwater Runoff?

Stormwater is water from rain or melting snow. It flows from rooftops, over paved streets, sidewalks and parking lots, across bare soil, and through lawns and storm drains. As it flows, runoff collects and transports soil, pet waste, salt, pesticides, fertilizer, oil and grease, litter and other pollutants. This water drains directly into nearby creeks, streams and rivers, without receiving treatment at sewage plants.

Polluted stormwater contaminates local waterways. It can harm plants, fish and wildlife, while degrading the quality of water.



A typical watershed system

MARC

Mid-America Regional Council
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Kansas City, Missouri 64105

For more information,
visit www.marc.org/Environment/Water
or call 816/474-4240.

Making and Using Compost



Autumn Watershed Tip

Help keep yard waste and kitchen scraps out of landfills and waterways



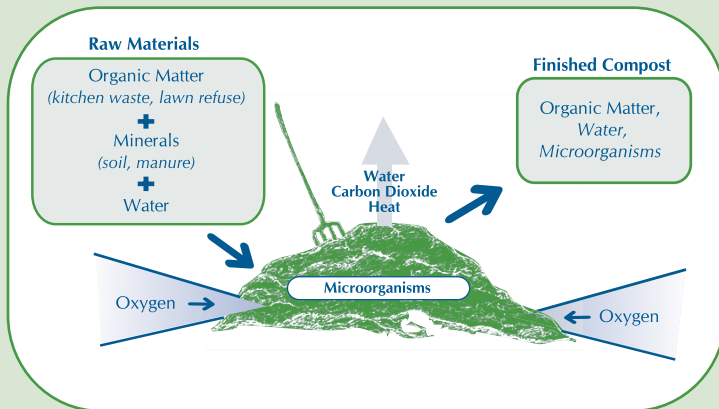
Clean Water.
Healthy Life.

What is compost?

Much of the yard waste and kitchen scraps that we collect and drag to the curb every week can be put to better use as compost. Compost is a rich dark humus, an end product of the natural decomposition of plant and plant products under controlled conditions. Composting is a practical and convenient way to reuse your lawn, garden, and kitchen wastes.

Leaves, grass clippings, fruit and vegetable scraps, crushed eggshells, tea bags, coffee grounds, and even coffee filters are all items that can be used to make compost, while reducing waste in landfills. Compost can be used to enrich flower and vegetable gardens, improve the soil around trees and shrubs, and enhance the soil in houseplants and planter boxes.

Composting is a complex feeding pattern involving hundreds of different organisms, including bacteria, fungi, worms and insects. What remains after these organisms break down organic refuse is the rich compost that nourishes lawns and gardens.



The benefits of using compost

Homeowners often have difficulty disposing of leaves, grass clippings and other garden refuse. In many states, it is illegal to dump lawn waste in landfills, and disposing of it in storm drains, lakes, rivers and streams clogs drains and pollutes water.

Instead of filling landfills and polluting local waterways with this waste, citizens can benefit from it. Backyard composting of organic waste creates natural soil additives for use on lawns and gardens, and used as potting soil for house plants. These are some other benefits of using compost:

- Improved soil texture
- Increased soil aeration
- Suppressed weed growth
- Improved water absorption
- Decreased soil erosion
- Less need for commercial soil additives
- Helps prevent soil compaction

Make your own compost pile

- Build your compost pile on soft soil or a pile of tree limbs to improve drainage. Boards, chicken wire or other materials can be used to make side frames to help hold the pile together if space is limited.
- Build successive layers of leaves, grass clippings, vegetable scraps, and other green matter. For more rapid decomposition, chop and mix components together.
- Cover layers with 1-2 inches of soil or manure.
- During dry weather, keep the pile moist. In cold winter months, cover the pile with black plastic to insulate and shed excess water.
- Aerate the pile by inserting a vertical pipe.
- Mix compost with a pitchfork after six weeks. This helps aerate the pile, and keeps the bacterial processes from overheating.

What can you compost?

To achieve the healthiest compost, you will need the right mix of ingredients. Here are some ideas for ingredients to include and those to avoid:

Stuff to include

- Grass clippings and leaves
- Fruit and vegetable scraps
- Tea bags and coffee grounds
- Fireplace ashes
- Vacuum cleaner lint
- Straw/hat
- Wood chips and sawdust
- Shredded newspaper

Stuff to avoid

- Diseased plants
- Human and pet waste
- Chemically treated wood products
- Barbecue grill ash
- Meat and fish scraps and bones
- Oils and other fatty food products
- Milk products
- Pernicious weeds