

Compost

Here are the nutrients you can get from various compostable materials (Don't forget kitchen scraps they are always good for the compost pile);



Nitrogen:

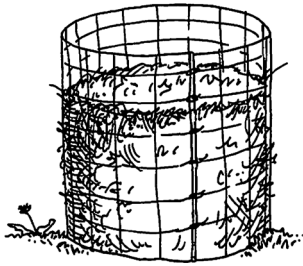
- manure (bird is best, then horse, then cow) grass clippings
- leaves (especially oak) alfalfa hay

Phosphorus:

- manure (bird is best, then horse, then cow)
- wood ashes
- wool waste
- hair (from a beauty parlor)

Potassium:

- wood ashes kelp
- alfalfa hay



Trace minerals:

- just about everything you add will provide some (food scraps – non-meat and non-dairy)
- wood ashes
- leaves

To build a classic compost heap the ingredients are layered into a pile that is then covered over with soil or straw (see illustration). An easy way to compost is to make a cylinder of wire and just toss everything in as you collect it. It's nice to have a pile of leaves or sawdust nearby to sprinkle over the top so you don't have to look at yesterday's leftovers. All compost piles need water, as wet as a rung out sponge is the moisture level you try for. They will decompose quickly if you chop all the ingredients, keep them moist, stir them once a month or so, mound them back up and cover them. As time progresses deep dark rich compost soil will appear ready to be spread on the garden.

This is a brief overview of an interesting topic. Composting is a great gardening activity. There is a lot of information about composting if you check with your U.C. Cooperative Extension office-check this web site, <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu> to download publication 8037, "Compost in a Hurry." Check with a local garden club, nursery or look in the library. Do some research and you can learn a lot more about composting.