

Six Different Ways to Compost, No Matter Where You Live

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eO4HdriXnVU>

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If you're curious about compost,

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but you don't know either what it is or just how to get started in a practical

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way at home, this video is for you.

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Kevin Espiritu here from Epic Gardening where it's my goal to help you grow a

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greener thumb. And you know when I started gardening,

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I didn't understand either what compost was or how to make it.

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And so that's what we're going to demystify in today's video.

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We're going to talk first of all what it is and why it's so important.

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And second of all,

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we're going to go over six different methods so that no matter who you are,

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where you live, what your circumstances are,

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there's at least something that you can do to start using some of those food

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scraps, that green waste, that brown waste on your property,

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and turning it into super rich compost for your garden. So without further ado,

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cultivate that Like button for Epic compost heaps. And let's get into the video.

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By the way, if you live in an apartment, I have not forgotten about you.

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At the end of the video,

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I'm going to go over three different cool countertop compost bins that you can

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use to make better use of your food scraps.

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Quick primer on compost in about 30 seconds before we get into our six methods.

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Number one, what does it actually do for us? Well,

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it improves the nutrients in our soil that our soil life can then further break

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down and make bioavailable to our plants. Number two,

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it improves the water retention. When you add organic matter,

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your soil can actually hold more water.

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It's actually one of the best ways to improve clay soil.

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So there's a whole lot of benefits and really it's just organic matter that's

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being broken down. Bacteria, fungi, insects,

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all sorts of things are breaking it down into smaller and smaller parts so that

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eventually it can actually be taken up by your plants to create some epic

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harvests. Okay, now let's get into method number one. Well, method number one,

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no surprise is the tried and true hot composting.

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Now what you're doing with hot composting is you are making sure that heat does

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not escape the system cause this is just a sped up version of normal

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decomposition. Now what you see here, it's called a Biostack.

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It's about a three by three by three foot system.

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I actually don't think this is available anymore,

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which is a shame because it's a really cool good system and it's got these

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covers.

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But the thing that I particularly like about it is it deconstructs in thirds,

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which means that you can just use the compost as you wish.

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You can kind of make yourself at home and just use exactly what you need.

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But what the benefit of hot composting is is number one,

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you can do it in large volumes. And so again,

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at minimum you need a cubic yard to get that biological activity going.

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But a lot of people,

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including my friend Charles Dowding who does this at an insane scale,

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and in fact the compost he generates on his property is all of the fertility he

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adds to his garden. He has a three or five bin system.

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Those are huge bins.

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You can actually check my tour out with him and it's fascinating to see how he

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does it. But the benefit is faster, the benefit is more volume,

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but the downsides are that there's quite a bit to manage.

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You need to get it up to a least 110 degrees. In organic certifications,

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I believe you have to get it routinely up to about 160 degrees Fahrenheit,

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which means you have to turn it quite often.

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You have to manage the different amounts of carbon and nitrogen,

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which is about a 25 or 30 to one ratio of carbon to nitrogen.

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You have to make sure that it's adequately moist,

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there's enough air and so there can be a lot to manage here.

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Which is why if you're lazy, you may want to opt for the next method.

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If you are a lazy gardener, and I confess I sometimes am this way,

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then the second method is going to be perfect for you.

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It is passive or cold composting.

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Effectively just imagine that compost pile you saw in tip number one,

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that you just stop turning and stop managing.

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That's exactly what we're talking about.

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Now I have a little garden bin here that I keep all of my, you know,

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greens and browns that I'm pruning off. So I have this bougainvillia here,

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or if you're my Filipino grandma you would call it a bougainBillea.

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And I don't want this right here, so we're going to prune that off.

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Now this could be chopped into really small pieces and it could be mixed into

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the middle of my hot compost bin and it would break down really quickly.

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Or as I will do, and do quite often,

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I just chop it up a little bit further and I'll leave it in this bin until I

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want to transfer it somewhere else. And you just pile it up,

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pile it up and let nature do the work.

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What happens there is often you'll get these pincher bugs,

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you'll get earthworms. A lot of different things will come in.

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Now what are the downsides to this? Number one, it's a lot slower.

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You're not taking advantage of all the inherent benefits of hot composting,

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so you are losing that. Number two, if you throw food scraps and stuff in here,

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it's not protected and so you're going to get probably some more rodent and pest

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pressure. And really that's it.

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The benefits are that it is just extremely easy. You just set it and forget it.

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You're basically just mimicking that forest floor or that natural decomposition

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process. So if you are a little bit lazier,

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this can be the perfect method for you.

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The third method is actually a method that I don't have on my property right

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now, although I used to compost this way,

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and that would be using a compost tumbler.

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So put on your imagination cap and just pretend like this is a compost tumbler.

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I'm going to put some up on the screen as well,

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but basically these were invented to solve two of the annoying problems of hot

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composting.

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And that would be managing that aeration and mixing the components so that you

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always have fresh stuff in the middle so that most of that heat and that

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biological activity can break down the freshest,

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most undecomposed stuff.

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And so what you'll do is typically you either have a one or a two chamber

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compost tumbler and what you'll do is you'll fill it up.

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It still has to have that bulk amount of material. You still need that,

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that space and that volume to be filled so that that biological activity can

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perpetuate itself. But then what you'll do is,

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let's say I filled this whole tumbler up and typically they're on, you know,

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little stands of some kind.

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And what you'll do is you just turn it every couple days.

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So you can manage the mixing and the aeration a lot better. Now,

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there are some significant advantages to that.

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The advantage that's most stand out is that you just make compost faster.

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You know, a lot of these tumbler companies say, oh,

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you're going to make compost in two weeks, three weeks.

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I find that that's still a little aggressive. I would say a month, two months,

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and that's still faster than hot composting, especially these larger volumes.

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Now,

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why do I not own one and why am I using a cloche as an example compost tumbler

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instead of one? Well, I used to own one.

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I used to own the Yimby (Yes in My Backyard) compost tumbler,

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I believe it was called. And what I personally found is number one,

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it still was kind of annoying to manage. Number two, you get,

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if you ever have any rain,

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you're going to get leakage out because there needs to be holes in a tumbler in

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order for it to actually work, right? You can't just completely seal it off.

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I had some really annoying issues with getting tons and tons of of black soldier

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fly larva aka maggots in there, which isn't necessarily the worst,

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but at high volumes it can be bad.

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And I honestly just found like it was a little more annoying to manage than my

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hot/cold compost pile out in the front yard.

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Now there are some significant benefits if you're in smaller spaces.

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If you're on a patio,

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if you really have pest problems in a hot or cold compost bin,

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then lifting it up off the ground and tumbling it and turning it over faster can

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be a really good idea. So I don't want to knock it,

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it's just not personally for me, but it can be a fantastic option for you.

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Method number four, which is my favorite method is vermicomposting,

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also known as worm composting.

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Now the bag that you see here is probably unlike many of the bags that you

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typically see.

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I actually did a video on how to build a stackable worm tote for about 20 or 30

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bucks that I highly recommend if you prefer the more stacker method.

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This is what's known as a continuous flow-through system,

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so it's a completely sealed single chamber,

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which I really prefer both for ease of use, for the smell.

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It really just doesn't really look like a worm bin.

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You don't get insects flying in and stuff like that. So I really,

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really prefer a continuous flow-through and specifically this bag,
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the Urban Worm Bag. But really worm composting is so fantastic,
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first of all, just intellectually interesting.
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It's very fun to see how these worms interact.
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But what you're doing here is you're adding some bedding,
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so that's kind of their base layer. Consider that coconut coir, shredded paper,
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things like that. The next thing you're doing is you're taking your food scraps,
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you're chopping them up nice and fine.
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The smaller the better because there's more surface area for them to work on,
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and you're layering. So you do a couple inches of bedding,
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couple inches of food scraps, et cetera. And then you add in some worms.
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In this case I added about two pounds of worms to start and that's the only
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worms I've ever added and it's been about 18 months.
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And they just self-regulate. If there's not enough food,
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they won't reproduce as much. If there's an overabundance of food,
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they'll reproduce like crazy and they'll make quick work of it.
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And so it's a fantastic system.
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And what happens is you basically are just putting stuff in the top and the
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worms are making their way through. So let's say,
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let's say this thing is completely full. It's completely full,
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I've got bedding and food scrap layers on the top 50% and let's say the worm

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castings are on the bottom. That's their excrement,

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which is basically our fertilizer. Well, they don't really like to live in that.

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And so these worms, the red wigglers,

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they like to climb upwards and so they're going to be in this upper 50%.

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Now when I come down and pull this drawstring down here and squeeze out some of

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that worm castings, there's not going to be a whole lot of worms in there,

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which can be an issue with some of the stacker systems.

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So I can just pull out once every couple of weeks a nice amount of worm

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castings, which are roughly a 1-1-1 NPK,

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and just add them straight into my garden.

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And I'm adding a ton of microbial life, some great micronutrients,

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some great trace minerals,

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and it's just a fantastic way to make really fast compost at home.

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Method number five is the most exciting.

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If you don't have enough space and you only have enough space for maybe a five

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gallon bucket on top of that,

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if you want to compost things that you shouldn't compost like dairy products,

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fats, oils, bones, meat products.

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If you have that and you want to make use of it,

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then the Bokashi composting method is the one for you.

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Now it takes a hard left turn from all the methods we've talked about because

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it's anaerobic, which means without oxygen.

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And what that means is we have a completely sealed five gallon bucket.

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Now I have an entire video on exactly how I both built this bucket and the

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results.

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I went straight from like a two to three week process from food scraps all the

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way to buried inground and the results.

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So I highly recommend you check that out. But in a quick nutshell,

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what Bokashi is is you're using an inoculated brand type of product.

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Basically it's lactobacillus and a couple other different strains of bacteria,

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and you layer the brand. Let's say you put some brand at the bottom, scraps,

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brand scraps, brand scraps,

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and then you put a cover on top and you let it just be.

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What's happening there is it's fermenting.

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It's actually sort of pre-digesting this and then when you're ready,

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which is usually about two weeks or so, you throw that out into the garden,

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bury it and it just vanishes. It just disappears.

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It's fascinating how quickly it happens. On top of that,

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you can also throw it into your hot compost bin, your passive compost bin,

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and it breaks down even faster.

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So there's a lot of different benefits to Bokashi.

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Let's go ahead and look inside,

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cause I haven't opened this in a while and I'm a little scared at what I might

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find. Okay. The moment of truth is here. Let's crack it open.

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Prepare my nose. So this was the plate that I use to seal it off.

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So it's got a little bit of growth on it. Not a big deal though.

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Now down here you can see there's quite a bit of white mold growth on it and you

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might think that's bad. It's actually not that bad.

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That's actually kind of what you're supposed to see.

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Now I can take all this material right here and it's looking a little, you know,

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it looks okay actually, and,

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and bury this and it's gonna break down extremely quickly and become

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bioavailable to my plants.

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So let me just put this back to rest and let's move on to our final method.

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Our sixth method, which is the pinnacle of laziness or efficiency,

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depending on how you look at it,

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is just taking food scraps and burying them directly in the garden. Now,

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I really can't say a whole lot more about this that my friend Mark over at Self

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Sufficient Me hasn't already said in an absolutely fascinating video that just

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went absolutely viral.

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So I highly recommend you check out Mark's video to see what happens when you

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bury fish, when you bury tomatoes,

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when you bury foods scraps directly in the garden and stand the test of time.

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But they will break down and you will see good fertility added to your garden.

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Now some of the downsides might be if you're burying things like fish heads or

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food scraps and you have digging pests,

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then they're probably going to dig it up and they will dig your garden up as a

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result. And for that reason,

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most of my composting happens in my passive or hot compost bin depending on how

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well I'm managing it or my worm bin because they're sealed and I can protect

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from any sort of rummaging pests.

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But if you want to bury you certainly can. So apartment people,

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I did not forget about you.

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I've been an apartment person and this is how I've solved it.

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So this one is called the Chef'n EcoCrock.

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It's just kind of a cute little countertop compost bin.

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And you might be thinking, okay,

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well if I'm in an apartment I can't actually really compost.

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Well if you don't want to use one of the methods we've talked about,

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this is a great way to just collect food scraps and you can either drop them off

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at a local compost recycler.

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So you kind of trade food scraps and you get compost back,

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which is a really good way to do it. You're outsourcing your compost,

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but you're giving food scraps in return.

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So this one's really nice cause it's heavy duty.

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This is like a porcelain type material. Cute little top.

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But then the thing that seals the deal for me is boom,

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you've got a removable pail that you can just take out and it's got a little

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smell capture filter there. Now there's a couple other ones that I kind of like,

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but obviously the one I have is the one I like the most.

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There's the Polder which is about one gallon size,

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has a bit of an industrial look.

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And then there's the Epica which is probably the most popular one,

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at least on Amazon,

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and it's got about I think a 1.3 gallon stainless steel look.

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Basically the same as this but just looks a little bit less cool I think.

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So if you're in an apartment,

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this can be a great way to collect and repurpose food scraps.

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Whatever method you use to compost I think it's important that you at least do

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try one of them. Even if it is just grabbing that countertop compost bin,

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trading it out for some food scraps and really practicing making use of the

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outputs of your home. Your kitchen, right, your coffee grounds, your eggshells,

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your chopped up ends of vegetables and repurposing it.

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And seeing what it can turn into. Cause remember, you know, for example,

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this bean plant, how much we use of it. We use the beans.

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We don't really use the rest of this. And so we should do something with that.

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And we should find ways to repurpose and make the most out of it.

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So I hope this was helpful. If it was, tell a friend, drop a comment,

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throw a Like, throw a subscribe. And until next time guys,

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good luck in the garden and keep on growing.