

Home Composting Workshop Bedford Farmers' Market June 14, 2010

Greens & Browns

An ideal compost pile will have a carbon to nitrogen ratio of 30:1. If there is too much carbon, decomposition slows down; too much nitrogen, anaerobic conditions will prevail and the pile will smell terrible and attract flies.

Most items we include in our compost piles are in fact a combination of carbon and nitrogen. A sound rule of thumb to follow is to layer your pile with half and half “greens” and “browns.” The following are average Carbon:Nitrogen ratios for common organic materials:

Greens = high Nitrogen

Manure	15:1
Seaweed	19:1
Food waste	20:1
Grass clippings	20:1
Coffee grounds	20:1
Clover	23:1
Hay	25:1
Vegetable scraps	25:1
Weeds	30:1

Browns = high Carbon

Wood chips	400:1
Cardboard, shredded	350:1
Sawdust	325:1
Newspaper, shredded	175:1
Pine needles	80:1
Straw	75:1
Corn stalks	75:1
Leaves	60:1
Peanut shells	35:1
Fruit waste	35:1