

<b>Table 3: Compost Troubleshooting</b>		
<b>Problem</b>	<b>Possible Causes</b>	<b>Solution</b>
Piles have a strong or putrid smell.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pile may be too wet.</li> <li>• Oxygen is lacking &amp; anaerobic conditions exist.</li> <li>• C:N ratio (&lt;20) is low; excess N being released as ammonia.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn pile &amp; increase turning frequency until problem subsides.</li> <li>• Increase carbon sources, such as bedding.</li> <li>• Cover to protect from rain.</li> </ul>
Pile is too wet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient carbon sources.</li> <li>• Bedding or manure is too wet.</li> <li>• Rain water or other water is entering compost.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add sawdust, straw, shredded paper or other dry amendments.</li> <li>• Turn more often.</li> <li>• Cover pile.</li> </ul>
Pile is too dry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compost amendments are too dry.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water lightly. Expose pile to rain, if possible. Add wet ingredients (such as urine-soaked bedding). Turn after watering.</li> </ul>
Pile is not heating up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C:N ratio is too high (&gt;60), microorganisms not active.</li> <li>• Pile lacks oxygen.</li> <li>• Pile is too dry (cannot squeeze water from ingredients).</li> <li>• Weather is too cold for compost process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add additional nitrogen—manure or vegetable scraps.</li> <li>• Turn pile.</li> <li>• Add water throughout pile &amp; turn.</li> <li>• When weather warms, turn pile. Add additional materials to pile.</li> </ul>
Pile heated up, but only for a short time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials may be too dense &amp; not allowing sufficient air flow.</li> <li>• Pile is too dry.</li> <li>• If the pile has been active for more than a month, the compost process may be complete.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn piles to ensure material distribution. Add nitrogen source and/or water to pile.</li> <li>• Turn pile again, water if necessary &amp; continue monitoring temperature. Look for uniformity in material.</li> </ul>
Decomposition process is slow. Temperature is too high.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C:N ratio is too low (&lt;20) causing high temperature which kills microorganisms that make compost work.</li> <li>• Pile lacks oxygen.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add carbon sources, such as leaves or bedding &amp; turn pile.</li> <li>• Turn pile.</li> </ul>
Pile is very hot >160°F. Mixture has turned gray (ash-like) & may smoke.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient turning.</li> <li>• Ingredients are too dry.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn materials &amp; spread pile out to let it cool down.</li> <li>• Monitor closely.</li> </ul>
Fly infestation; problems with vermin or other animals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manure or food scraps are exposed to open air.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix materials immediately &amp; cover with bulking materials.</li> <li>• Turn more often for proper aeration &amp; increase composting activity.</li> </ul>
Viable weed seeds, pest larva, & pathogens in compost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temperatures in pile did not reach 130°F or did not stay at this level for sufficient time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn pile more frequently &amp; make sure C:N ratio adequate to raise temperatures to 131°F for at least 15 days.</li> </ul>
Pile has gone through 2 or more heating cycles, but compost still contains recognizable bedding material.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contains wood shavings or wood chips. These materials are slow to degrade.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor pile moisture, add water if necessary. Give pile additional time to degrade. Use as mulch instead of compost. Screen and reuse wood chips.</li> </ul>