



# A SENSE OF HUMUS

YOUR GUIDE TO  
COMPOSTING WITH THE  
CLASSIC COMPOSTER

# LE SENS DE L'HUMUS

VOTRE MANUEL DE COMPOSTAGE  
AU MOYEN DU  
COMPOSTEUR CLASSIQUE

***What is Composting?***

Everyone knows that composting is Mother Nature's way of recycling by transforming natural nutrients of waste organic matter into useable nutrition for all plants.

The SOILSAVER® Classic Composter turns kitchen and yard waste into dark, nutrient-rich, earth smelling soil. If you have a garden, lawn, trees, shrubs or even plant boxes, you can use this valuable compost to improve the soil and the plants.

***Why should I Compost?***

First, it's easy. Second, by using compost you return organic matter to the soil in a useable form. Humus in the soil improves plant growth by:

- helping to breakdown heavy clay soils.
- adding water and nutrient-holding capacity to sandy soil, and
- adding essential nutrient to any soil.

Rich organic soil helps produce healthy plants. Healthy plants help clean our air and conserve our soil.

Composting cuts down on your household garbage by recycling organic materials. In fact, if you're composting kitchen and yard waste in addition to recycling newspaper, bottles and cans, you're cutting your waste almost in half!

If all your neighbors did this too, it would dramatically reduce the amount of household garbage that's choking our landfill sites.

***How to start your Composter***

Spread approximately 4" of carbon materials such as twigs, straw or dry leaves over the bottom. If these aren't readily available you can rake up dry materials from under hedges, shrubs or the flower garden.

Over this spread a couple of shovel fulls of earth from your garden. Then start adding your kitchen waste or cuttings from the garden. It is as easy as that.

***What can I Compost?***

One-third of your household garbage can be composted!

Yard wastes such as fallen leaves, grass clippings, weeds before they seed, and the remains of disease-free garden plants make excellent compost.

You can also compost kitchen scraps such as fruit and vegetable peels and trimmings, egg shells, coffee grounds and filters, and tea bags. **Don't** compost meat, bones or fatty foods such as cheese, salad dressing or leftover cooking oil, as they may attract pests.

***DO***

**YARD WASTE**

- Leaves
- Dry grass
- Weeds
- Garden plants
- Soft plant stems

**KITCHEN WASTE**

- Fruit and vegetable matter
- Egg shells (crushed)
- Tea bags, coffee grounds and filters

***DON'T***

**YARD WASTE**

- Wet grass

**KITCHEN WASTE**

- Meat, fats, bones, fish
- Dairy products
- Cooking oil

***How do I Compost?***

The composting process requires:

- organic material
- air
- moisture
- soil (optional)

The SOILSAVER® Classic creates rich compost when you alternate layers of organic waste, keep the material moist and aerate it. It is helpful, although not essential, to add 1/2" layers of soil which contribute micro-organisms to the pile.

The SOILSAVER® Classic performs most efficiently and effectively when you follow these suggestions:

**Chop waste into smaller bits.**

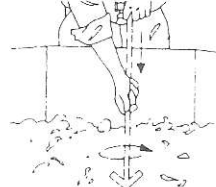
To accelerate composting, begin with a layer of nutrient-rich material such as your own finished compost, bone meal or a commercial starter (available at garden centers). Continue to layer kitchen waste, yard waste and soil until SOILSAVER® Classic is full. It's important to use materials with a high carbon content such as leaves, as well as materials with a high nitrogen content such as kitchen scraps and grass clippings. For more details, see page 3. Keep the material as moist as a squeezed-out sponge. Occasional watering may be required to moisten the pile if it becomes too dry. Turn the material (at least four or five times during the summer) with a pitchfork, shovel or compost turner so it's well aerated. You can turn the pile once a week but more frequent turning will inhibit composting. Remove finished compost through the convenient doors at the base of the SOILSAVER® Classic.

## ***How long will it take to make Compost?***

This will vary. It will depend on the size of your kitchen and yard wastes, moisture of material and the outside temperature. With a SOILSAVER<sup>®</sup> Classic Composter, finished compost can be produced in as little as two months.

## ***Will it smell?***

A compost pile that is working well should not have an unpleasant odor, unless the material is too wet or too compacted. Turn the pile to allow it to dry out a bit and to ensure that it is well aerated. Adding dry organics such as autumn leaves can help absorb excess moisture.



## ***What is the best location for Composting?***

Place the SOILSAVER<sup>®</sup> Classic on a **level patch** of earth in the sun, convenient to the house. It is important that the ground be level so that the weight of the material is evenly distributed. If it is uneven, the lid won't fit.

## ***Can I Compost pet waste?***

No. Both dog and cat feces may contain organisms that can cause disease in humans.

## ***Will Composting attract animals?***

To lessen this risk:

- When adding kitchen waste, either dig it in immediately or cover with soil. You may find it easier to collect food waste by the kitchen sink in a plastic container with a lid for a few days before taking it out to the SOILSAVER<sup>®</sup> Classic.
- Do not add meat scraps, fat, bones, fish or dairy products to your compost pile.

## ***Can I Compost wood ashes?***

Yes, wood ashes that are cold and soaked in water from a fireplace or stove are a good source of potash. It is best to add many thin layers as the potash leaches out. Do not compost charcoal or coal ashes.

## ***How can I discourage flies?***

Dig in food waste each time you add it, or cover it with a little soil.

## ***Can I Compost weeds?***

To prevent contaminating the soil with weed seeds, do not put ripened weeds in the compost heap. If the weeds are green and the seeds have not matured, they may be safely added to the SOILSAVER<sup>®</sup> Classic.

## ***What about grass clippings?***

Grass is about 60% water and 40% cellulose and packs into dense layers, which limits oxygen penetration. The net result is an anaerobic condition, producing terrible odors.

Clippings should be left to dry for a day, or until they turn brown (but not completely dried out). Add them in layers of 6" to the SOILSAVER<sup>®</sup> Classic, or mix 50-50 with last year's leaves.

To avoid overloading your SOILSAVER<sup>®</sup> Classic with grass clippings, double mow or use a mulching lawn mower leaving the clippings where they fall. This will add nutrients to your lawn, lowering the need for chemical fertilizers.

## ***What can I do with leaves?***

If you are lucky enough to have lots of leaves you can make a superior compost and leaf mould. Ideally, the leaves should be saved to be mixed in with the nitrogen-rich grass clippings and weeds in the spring and summer. Leaves form the correct balance for superior compost, being high in carbon.

Excess leaves kept from the fall decompose into fluffy, dark brown leaf mould with that lovely earthy aroma you find on the forest floor. Leaf mould is ideal for weed control on flower beds and as a moisture-retaining mulch, especially for long dry spells when plants need it most.

If you have too many to use yourself, put the excess out, for municipal leaf composting collection, or store for next season's composting.

You can reduce the volume of your leaves 15 to 20 times by placing them in an empty garbage bin and using an electric string trimmer to chop them up. An equally successful volume reduction method is to run your rotary lawn mower back and forth over the pile of leaves.



## Can I Compost in winter?

For Winter composting, build a base of fall leaves about twelve inches high at the bottom of the SOILSAVER® Classic. Continue to add kitchen scraps all through the winter. The waste will freeze, breaking down the fibers.

In the spring add three shovelfuls of earth from your garden and mix all the materials together. The decomposing process will become active again.

## Principles of Composting

This section is for those who would like a more thorough understanding of how composting works.

The compost pile is a teeming microbial farm. Bacteria start the process of decaying organic matter by breaking down plant tissue. Fungi and actinomycetes soon join the bacteria. Later in the cycle, centipedes, millipedes, beetles and earthworms do their part.

Anything growing in your yard is potential food for these tiny decomposers. Carbon and nitrogen, from cells of dead plants and dead microbes, fuel their activity. The micro-organisms use the carbon in leaves or woodier wastes as an energy source. Nitrogen provides the microbes with the raw element of protein to build their bodies.

Everything organic has a ratio of carbon to nitrogen (C:N) in its tissues; grass clippings, for example, have a C:N of 25, meaning there are 25 parts of carbon to one part nitrogen.

Average C:N for commonly composted materials are:

oak leaves 50	sawdust 150-500	pine needles 60-110
ash leaves 25	vegetable trimmings 15-25	

The ideal C:N is around 30. The C:N need not be exact, and you are unlikely to have a precise way to measure it anyway. If you are having problems with your compost pile, however, it may be because you have too little of one type of material. If, for example, you have mostly materials which are high in carbon, such as sawdust or dry leaves, composting may be very slow. You can speed things up by mixing in materials high in nitrogen such as grass clippings or kitchen scraps.

If your pile is giving off an odor of ammonia, the problem may be an excess of materials high in nitrogen. Simply add some high carbon materials. Layering can be useful in arriving at the correct proportions, but a complete mixing of ingredients is preferable for the composting process.

## Surface area

The more surface area micro-organisms have to work on, the faster the materials are decomposed. It's like a block of ice in the sun - slow to melt when it's large, but melts very fast when broken into smaller pieces.

Chopping your garden wastes with our compost turner or a shovel or running them through a shredding machine or lawn mower will speed their composting.

## Volume

A large compost pile will insulate itself and hold the heat of microbial activity. It's center will be warmer than its edges. Smaller piles will have trouble holding heat. Larger piles won't allow enough air to reach the microbes at the center.

## Moisture and Aeration

All life on earth needs a certain amount of water and air to sustain itself - even the microbes in the compost pile. They function best when the compost materials are about as moist as a wrung-out sponge, and are provided with many air passages. Extremes of sun or rain can adversely affect this moisture balance.

## Time and temperature

The faster the composting, the hotter the pile. If you use materials with a proper C:N ratio, provide a large amount of surface area and a big enough volume, and see that moisture and aeration are adequate, you will have a hot, fast compost (hot enough to burn your hand).

## Keep your Composter Composting

### OPTIMAL CONDITIONS

Composting requires about two cubic feet of equal portions of grass, leaves, plant and vegetable trimmings, all chopped up, moistened and thoroughly mixed to cause pile to heat. Outside temperature must be at least 10°C or 50°F. Usually takes 3-4 days to heat up to maximum temperature.

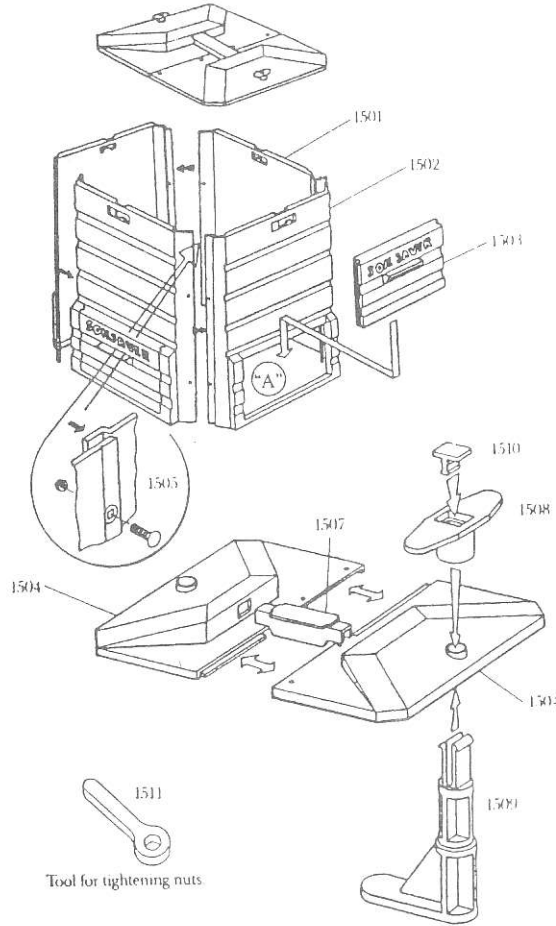
### MINIMAL CONDITIONS

When conditions are improper, the temperature won't rise and composting is inhibited. It's easy to get your composter working at its maximum. You can add small quantities if you can't generate two cubic feet of materials at one time; it just takes a little longer to break down into compost.

Compost Condition	Moist (no smell)	Dry (no smell)	Wet (smells)	Soggy (smells)
Problem	not enough nitrogen material	in direct sun and no new materials added	too much fresh fruit skins, rinds, bruised fruit or vegetables	rain or excessive watering
Solution	add nitrogen materials like grass cuttings, manure or an organic activator	add enough water to dampen only and add nitrogen material if necessary	add shovelful of dry soil, shredded leaves	turn pile to aerate and add shredded leaves

# SOILSAVER® Assembly Instructions

## Parts List



Part #	Description	QTY	Part #	Description	QTY
1501	Solid Side	2	1509	Lock Assembly	
1502	Door Side	2	1508	Lock Knob	2
1503	Doors	2	1508	Lock Knob	2
1504	Lid Halves	2	1510	Caps	2
1505	1/4" Nylon carriage Bolt & Hex Nut Assembly	12	1507	Cover Handle	1

### Lid assembly:

Remove Cover Handle (#1507) from Door Side, see illustration "A", Insert Cover Handle into Lid Halves (#1504) and push two halves together.

Insert Nylon Carriage Bolts (#1505) into two inside holes and the two outside holes on the lid and hand tighten nut, using tool supplied.

### Lock assembly:

Insert Lock Post (#1509) from under side of lid and press Lock Knob (#1508) onto top of Lock Post and snap into place. Push Cap (#1510) into Knob Recess.

### Side assembly:

All sides are interchangeable. Position Door Sides in convenient location. Connect sides by putting the flat edge with the square indent for the Nylon Carriage Bolt on the outside over the lip edge of adjoining side. Insert Nylon Carriage Bolt from outside and hand tighten bolt onto nut. Repeat with each side until unit is complete. Tighten all nuts firmly with tool supplied, by hand.

### Nylon nuts and bolts:

Rust-proof nylon nuts and bolts are supplied so disassembly can be done easily should accidental damage occur, or when old age (after 25 years) requires a panel to be replaced and recycled.

### Location:

SOILSAVER® Classic should, where possible, be placed in a sunny location. It is imperative also to place the SOILSAVER® Classic on level ground to prevent the sides from twisting as the unit is filled, this ensures that the lid will fit properly.



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Customer Service Department  
Soilsaver Inc.  
P.O. Box 129  
Cobourg, Ontario, Canada  
K9A 4L1

Some States do not allow limitations on how long an implied warranty lasts, so the above limitation may not apply to you. Some States do not allow the exclusion or limitation of incidental or consequential damage, so the above limitation or exclusion may not apply to you. This Warranty gives you specific legal rights, and you may also have other rights which vary from State to State.

RECYCLING BEGINS AT HOME.

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Service après-vente  
Soilsaver Inc.  
P.O. Box 129  
Cobourg, Ontario, Canada  
K9A 4L1

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