

Composting Weeds Onsite

Composting in your project area is cost effective, leaves organic material and nutrients onsite, and provides excellent habitat for wildlife. This is not always the best option for some sites, such as those that are more landscaped. Talk with Parks staff to determine if composting onsite is appropriate for your project.

Steps to Building an On-site Compost Pile:

1) Find an area free of native plants and remove all invasive plants and roots.

Thoroughly clear the area before you build your compost pile. If there is no good space, start by clearing a ~ 6'x6' patch of invasive plants to make room for the compost pile.

2) Lay out a frame of branches that will define your compost area.

If you are using burlap, lay the burlap down first, then put the frame of branches on top of the burlap edges. The area of the pile should not be more than 40 square feet. The sides of the frame should not be much longer than you are tall. When possible create windrow compost piles; long, short compost piles that are 3ft wide and 2ft high running parallel to the contours of the slope. Windrow compost piles can be as long as necessary.

If you are working in a wet area, or on soils that you expect will become saturated later in the season locate compost piles where soils can freely drain all year. This will help minimize the likelihood that plant fragments will re-root from the compost pile.

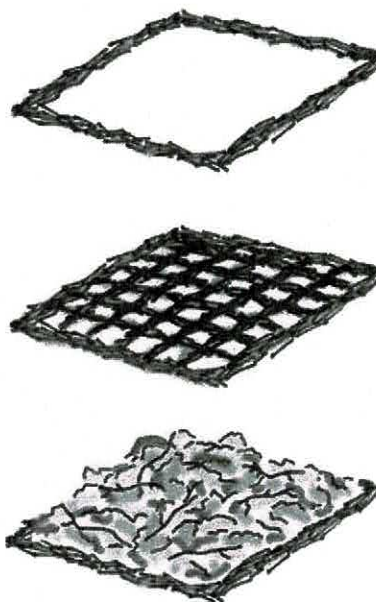
Building an On-site Composting Pile

3) Fill in your frame with dead branches and sticks found on site.

Place them in both directions to form a grid. This helps prevent the composting weeds from having direct contact with the soil.

4) Put pulled weeds on top of the pile.

Stack ivy in smaller bundles and contain all debris inside the frame. Do not make the pile higher than three feet tall, and do not let the pile spill over beyond your frame. Separate woody material from herbaceous weeds when creating piles. The herbaceous material breaks down faster and can be redistributed sooner. Make sure that



only invasive plant material goes into your compost pile; resist the urge to “rake the forest floor clean.”

5) Check piles throughout the year.

Turn or maintain them, as needed, to ensure that roots do not re-sprout.

- Reproductive parts, such as seed heads and roots, should be collected separately and placed on top (roots facing upwards) of composting piles so they do not sprout or root in the soil.
- Knotweed and certain other noxious weeds are capable of re-sprouting from plant fragments. Knotweed should not be touched or disturbed by volunteers. Please leave it for paid crews and notify COB Parks staff if you find it on your site.
- All plant parts of poison hemlock, purple loosestrife, garlic mustard, yellow archangel, and giant hogweed should be removed from the site in garbage bags and disposed of in a landfill. If you have large amounts of organic material that needs to be disposed of, contact Parks staff to arrange pick up.

Source: Adapted from Green Seattle Partnership's 2016 "Forest Steward Field Guide" manual, p. 12-13.
(p. 12-13: https://www.greenseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Field-Guide-2016_optimized_fonts.pdf)