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Weeding
and mulch
more**

For the avid gardener

Use Debris for Composting

Fall garden and yard cleanup can result in a mountain of garden debris and fallen leaves to be disposed of. A good portion of this material can be composted and the decomposed organic matter eventually returned to the garden. Finished compost is an excellent soil amendment; half-finished compost makes a good mulch.

Composting can be as simple as dumping organic materials in a pile and forgetting about them for several years. But if you want to speed up this garden recycling process, (compost can be finished in as little as four months) some care must go into constructing the pile.

The main component of the pile, is, of course, the organic materials. Most all vegetable materials (including kitchen wastes) can be composted, but avoid using woody and diseased materials, weeds that carry abundant seeds, and clippings from lawns that have been treated with herbicides. A mixture of debris is ideal. Shredding it will speed decomposition.

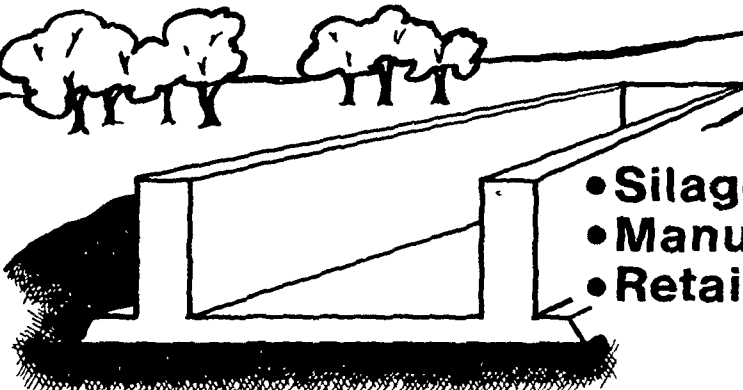
Build your pile in layers by topping 6-8 inches of compostable materials with a thin layer of rich soil or old compost. This supplies the microorganisms that actually do the "composting." A frosting of limestone and a scattering of 10-10-10 fertilizer will nurture these bacteria. (Manure is an excellent nitrogen source if you can get it.)

Water and air are the remaining ingredients needed for a viable compost pile. Each completed layer of the pile should be watered (but not drowned) before the next is added, and the entire pile watered occasionally if rainfall is scarce. Air is supplied by limiting the size of the pile (5x5x5 feet is workable), by avoiding over watering, by using a mixture of materials, and by occasionally turning the pile "inside-out." A pile should definitely be turned if it starts to give off a bad odor.

Composting is a good solution to garden cleanup and will ultimately be of great benefit to your garden.

For more details on composting ask for Extension leaflets, "Making and Using Compost" and "Compost."

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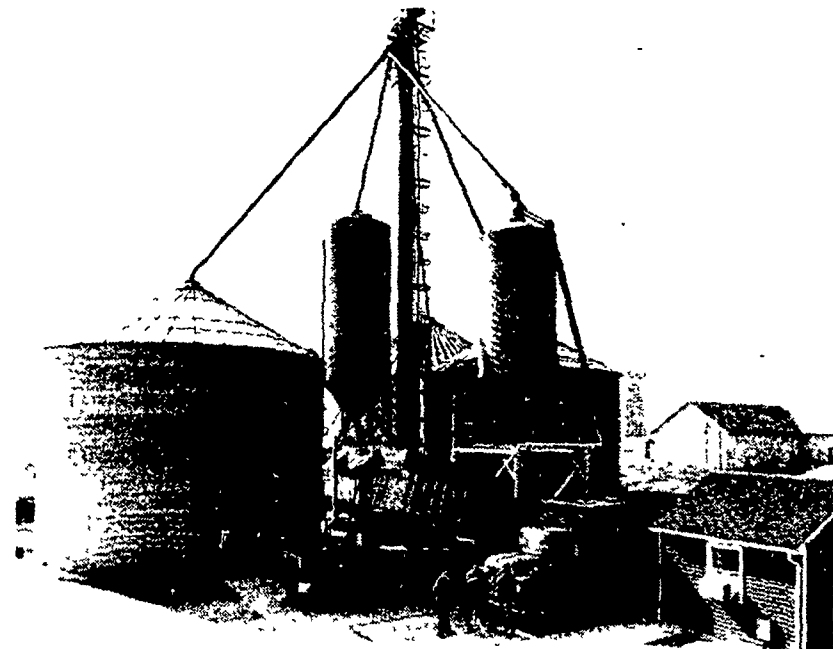
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