

Pest-proofing your Compost Bin

“Will my composter attract pests?” This is one of the most common questions new composters ask. Fortunately the answer is: probably not, if you take a few simple precautionary steps. The best solution is prevention. This fact sheet outlines some general tips and specific methods for protecting your compost pile.

The Best Prevention Tips

■ DON'T ADD ANY ANIMAL WASTE

Do not compost any meats, fish, bones, oils, fatty foods or pet manures. Animals will be attracted by the smell. See our fact sheet “What to compost” for more information.

■ BURY NEW MATERIAL

Bury fresh food wastes into the pile, or cover them with a thin layer of soil or dry leaves. This will reduce smells and add beneficial micro-organisms to the pile.

■ KEEP IT WORKING

Keep your compost pile working properly. A well-managed pile is less likely to attract pests. See the fact sheet “Composting: The Basics” for more information on maintaining a healthy compost pile.

■ KEEP GARBAGE SECURE

Keep your garbage secure. Pests are more likely to discover your compost if they are attracted by other smells. It's a good idea to put plastic garbage bags into a container when they are at the curb, and to keep them well protected before they are put out.



Pest-proof your compost bin

The insects and other living creatures in your bin – from bacteria to worms, mites and beetles – actually do the work of decomposing. However, if you want to prevent access by larger animals, you can pest-proof your bin. This will prevent animals from tunnelling up through the bottom, or climbing into the bin from the sides or top.

- Line the bottom and outside walls of your bin with strong half-inch galvanized wire mesh or hardware cloth (16-20 gauge).
- Make sure that the lid on your composter locks in place so that animals cannot open it. If it doesn't, a hinge and latch or a chain or rope may secure it. A brick or rock on the top might also be enough to deter the critters.
- Piling rocks or bricks around the outside bottom of your bin is a good temporary measure against burrowing animals.

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Flies and other insects

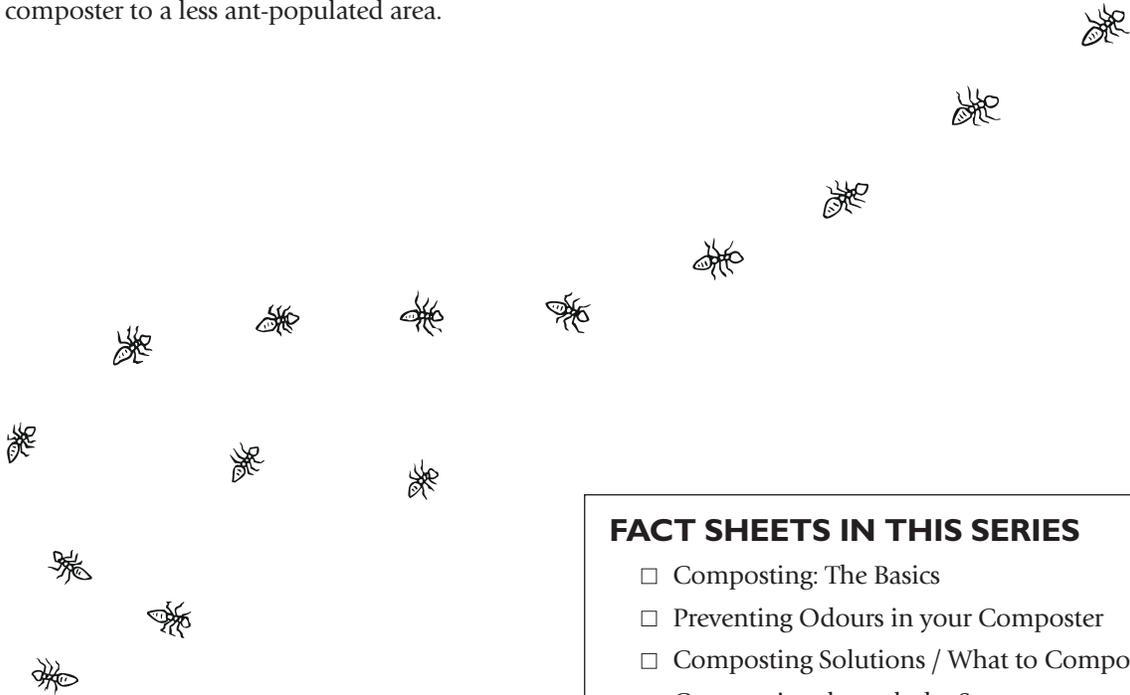
Flies around your compost bin can be a nuisance. Again, the best solution is prevention.

Each time you add food scraps, dig them into the pile or cover them well with soil or dry leaves. If flies are already a problem, cover the area they are on. Other insects in your bin shouldn't concern you. It's actually the living creatures in the bin that do the work of decomposing. These creatures range from microscopic bacteria and fungi to visible helpers such as earthworms, mites, beetles and sow bugs.

Ants are also helpful to the composting process. If there are so many that they are a nuisance, or if you are bothered by red ants that bite, you can moisten the compost pile a bit more. Ants like dry conditions. If that doesn't work, you may need to move your composter to a less ant-populated area.

Any Questions?

Following the tips in this fact sheet will help you avoid encounters with small animals. If you have questions, call Peterborough Green-Up, the City of Peterborough Waste Management Office or Peterborough County Environmental Services.



FACT SHEETS IN THIS SERIES

- Composting: The Basics
- Preventing Odours in your Composter
- Composting Solutions / What to Compost
- Composting through the Seasons
- Pest-proofing your Compost Bin
- Using Compost in your Yard
- Vermicomposting



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