

# Environment magazine offers help in solving compost problems

By BARBARA HALSALL  
Composting Problems?

As many of us rush to compost our kitchen scraps and yard waste, a number of problems emerge. I have experienced some of these but fortunately there were answers.

The May/June issue of Earthkeeper Magazine gives those answers. The purpose of this magazine is to provide a reliable and consistent source of environmental information to concerned individuals. The aim is to foster appreciation of and respect for the natural world. For more information on the magazine contact the printers in Guelph at 519-763-9357.

With permission we are printing an excerpt from Maria Prohaszka's article on composting. She suggests an ice cream bucket as a good plastic pail with a lid to hold kitchen scraps under the sink. Remember, you can make a difference.

## Having Problems? Here's Why

### It smells terrible

- Reasons:
- too many fruit and vegetable scraps
  - not enough air or the material is too wet

- Solutions:
- mix in some dry soil or shredded leaves
  - turn daily to aerate. Possibly add dry shredded leaves

### The pile is dry and won't heat up

- Reasons:
- not enough water
  - if the pile is uncovered the sun may dry it out

- Solution:
- add enough water to dampen materials



### The pile is damp and won't heat up

- Reason:
- not enough nitrogen
- Solution:
- add nitrogen-rich materials (grass clippings, kitchen scraps, etc.)

### It attracts flies, fruit flies, wasps and other insects

- Reason:
- kitchen scraps have been left uncovered
- Solution:
- cover scraps with a layer of dirt or leaves

### The pile attracts animal pests

- Reason:
- cooked food or bones have been added to the compost
- Solution:
- do not add things that attract animals or make sure your container is not accessible to them

## Do's and Don'ts

### COMPOSTABLE

Grass clippings - Do not use clippings which have been treated with weed killer or insecticides if you plan to use the finished compost on food crops.

Leaves should be shredded. Garden refuse - Disease-free refuse should be used.

Plant trimmings - Woody stalks should be chopped or shredded.

Weeds - Don't put in weeds that have ripened seeds on them.

Fruit and vegetable peels, cores and rinds should be chopped small or bruised, i.e. cut grapefruit peel into quarters and watermelon rind into 5 cm (2") chunks.

Tea bags and coffee grounds - Split tea bags open.

Stale bread - Break it into small pieces.

Nut shells, seafood shells, egg shells - These degrade slowly, so put a limited quantity in and crush them first.

Fireplace ashes - Make sure they're cool.

Cardboard and paper should be shredded and used in limited quantities.

Sawdust - In limited quantities since it breaks down slowly.

Human hair, pet hair and feathers - These are high in nitrogen. Avoid hair that has been chemically coloured or conditioned.

### NON-COMPOSTABLE

Animal meat and bones, fish scraps, cooked foods, dairy products, grease and oil will attract other animals.

Plastic, glass, foil and metal - Not biodegradable.

Toxic materials like paint, solvents, motor oil and household cleansers - These things are toxic wastes and shouldn't even be put out in your regular household garbage.

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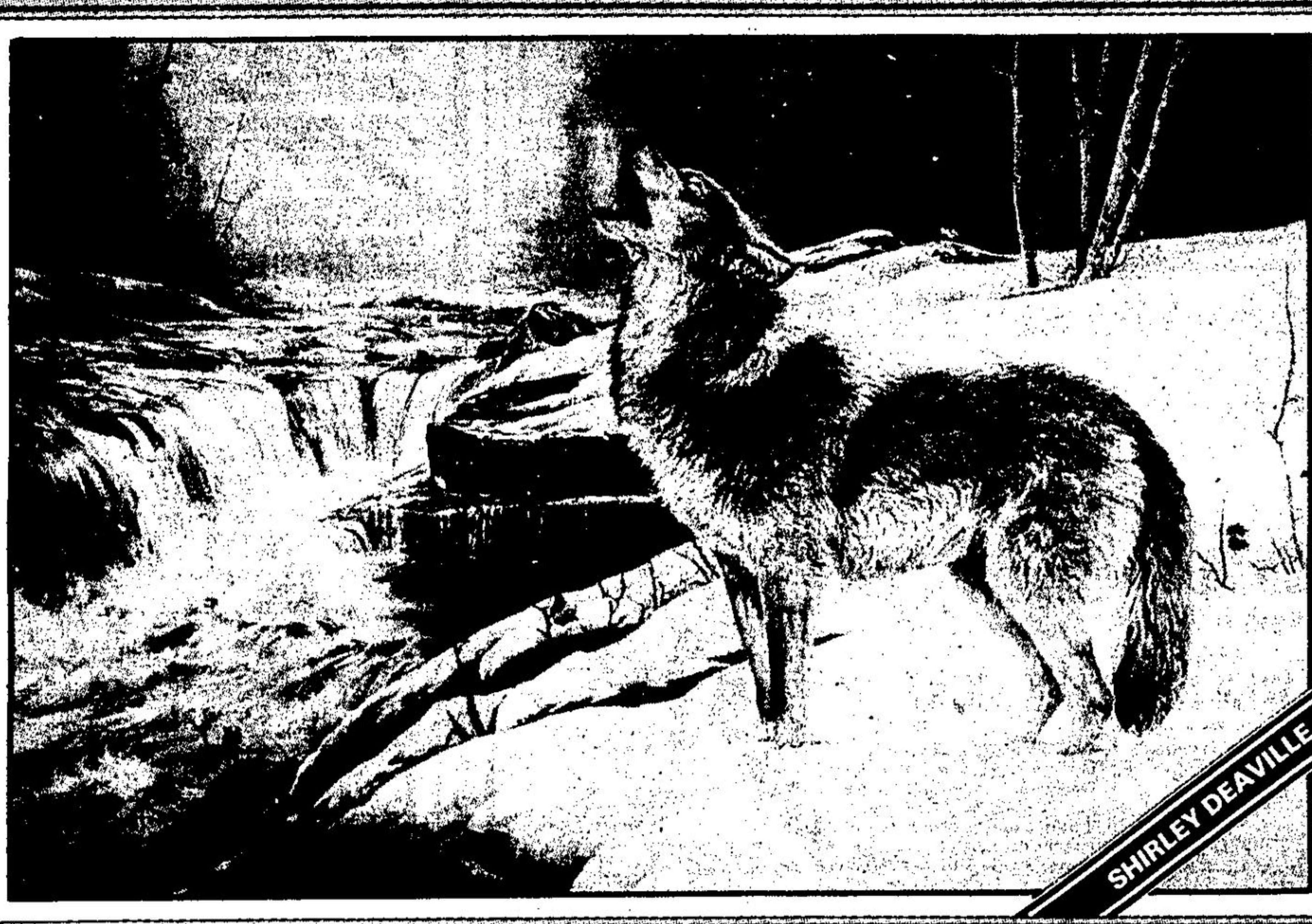
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