

# The do's and don'ts of having a home composter

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A simple compost bin can be constructed out of untreated lumber, fine fencing material, bricks or even straw bales, which are an excellent brown material. The key points to a home-built system are adequate ventilation, moisture retention and ease of turning the mixture. Start with a layer of garden soil, with maybe a bit of manure to get things cooking.

There are certain items that should never be tossed into a compost pile for various reasons. If you're going to use wood chips or sawdust, be sure that it comes from thoroughly untreated lumber, as chemicals, like arsenic, are often present in lumber meant for decks, swingsets and outdoor uses. Likewise, any plant clippings that have treated with

herbicides or pesticides should be left out, and avoid diseased plants and pernicious weeds with formidable seeds.

While plant matter from the kitchen is fine, animal products, including dairy, are not. Meat scraps, bones, sweets or salty foods compost poorly and will certainly attract vermin. Adding some horse manure is fine, but definitely avoid other animal wastes which may transmit diseases to humans. Remember, if you're going to use your compost on your vegetable garden, what goes in will be passed to your plants.

When using plant materials, use thin layers, or blend grass or leaf clippings into the already started mixture. To help the process along, chipping or grinding down the dead plant matter will speed up

the decomposition.

During warmer months, you should start to see the fruits of your labor in four to six weeks. One day, as you turn the pile, you'll notice crumbly masses of brownish-black material that smells like fresh soil...compost! Use it to fertilize flowers, fruits and vegetables, or as a mulch around bedding areas. In time, you may follow the path of experienced composters, and get a second bin going to keep a steady supply.

—By Daniel Aspell

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## Fascinating facts about faucets

Did you know ...

A dripping faucet can waste 290 gallons (or 1,095 litres) of water a year?

Did you know ...

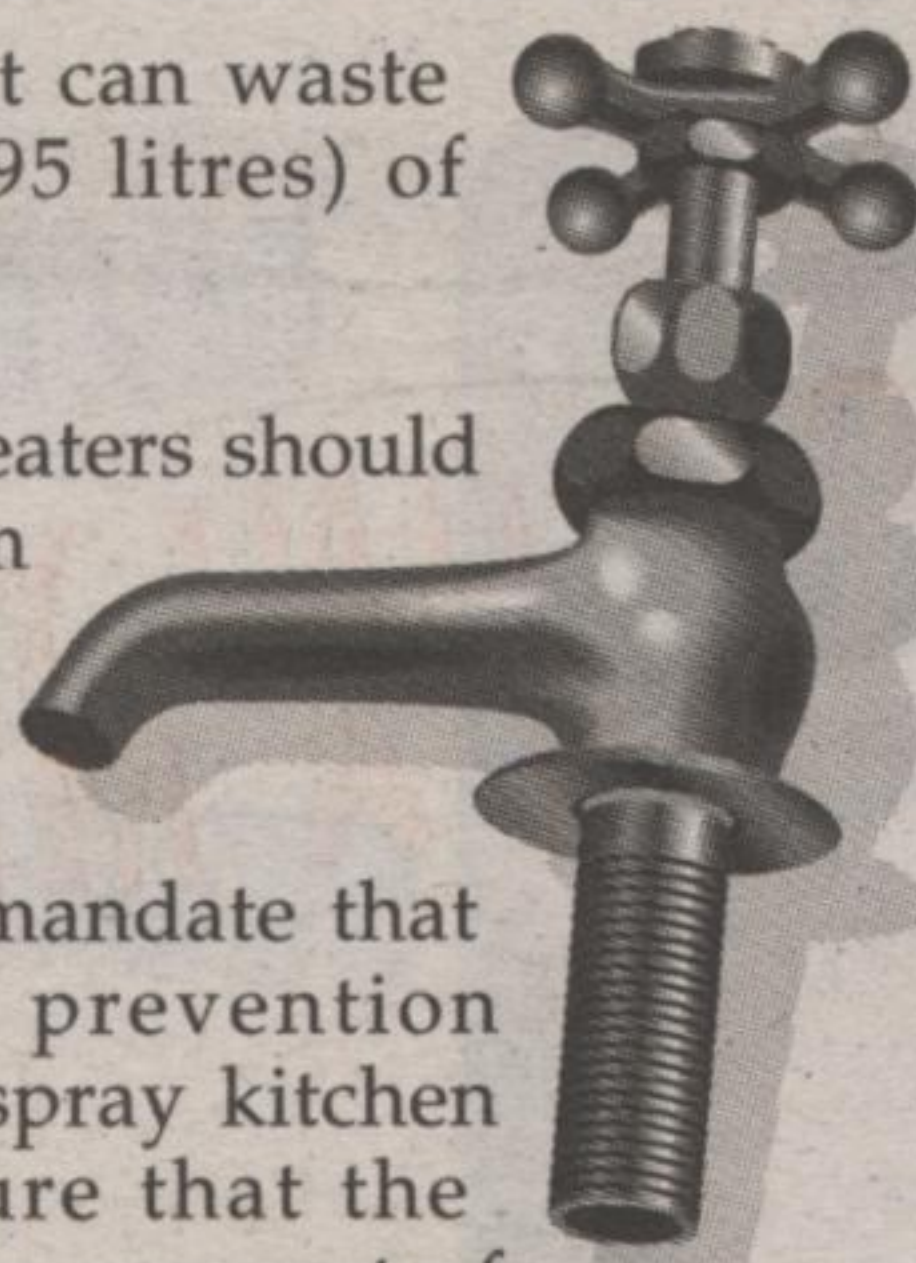
Most hot water heaters should be set to a maximum of 120°F for safety?

Did you know ...

Plumbing codes mandate that there be backflow prevention used with pull-out spray kitchen faucets to make sure that the water flows only one way—out of your faucet? Without this, dirty sink water could be drawn back into the faucet and clean water supply.

For more information and ideas, contact Delta Faucet at 1-800-345-DELTA (1-800-345-3358) or visit our website at [www.deltafaucet.com](http://www.deltafaucet.com)

—News Canada



## How to clean window treatments

Here are some simple and effective tips from the experts at Blinds To Go superstores to help you through this year's cleaning of your window treatments.

### Aluminum and Vinyl blinds

Use ordinary soft, clean dust cloths, chemically treated dust cloths, vacuum cleaner brush attachments, or other available ordinary household aids. The paint surface of the slats is quite smooth and dust is easily brushed off if done at regular intervals. To vacuum, use the brush dust head attachment and tilt slats first up, then down (but not totally exposed) to reach the entire top and bottom surfaces. To dust, use a soft clean or chemically treated dust cloth and tilt the slats as above.

To wash, use a damp cloth or sponge and mild detergent. Use warm or cold water—not hot water. Tilt the slats as above. Protect the floor or sill from excess water. The blind can also be taken down, placed in a bathtub of mild soapy water, then rinsed clean, wiped dry, or allowed to dry completely in the open air.

### Wood Blinds

Special care must be taken when cleaning natural wood blinds. Washing the blind is not recommended. Although the wood is sealed, water or even excessive dampness may cause warping or discoloration of the slats. Since the surface of the slats is smooth, dust may be easily brushed off at regular intervals using a clean soft dust cloth or a vacuum cleaner brush attachment.

### Fabric Pleated Shades

Most of the cellular shades, at Blinds To Go are anti-static, and they require very little cleaning. A light sweep with your vacuum cleaner brush attachment is all that is needed to keep them dust free. For a more thorough cleaning, the entire shade assembly may be gently wiped with a soft damp cloth using lukewarm (not hot) water. Take special care when handling opaque shades to avoid creasing, and do not immerse them in water. For tougher stains, spot clean the area with a mild detergent.

—News Canada

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