

# Composting for Community Gardens

KATHARINE LEON

DIRECTOR OF  
OPERATIONS, LIVING  
COAST DISCOVERY  
CENTER



# What is Composting?

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- ▶ The process of recycling organic material into humus, a component of healthy soil that provides nutrients for plants and increases the ability of soil to retain water.
  - ▶ Compost contains all the necessary elements required for optimal plant growth.
- ▶ Take food and brown matter, put it in a pile, make soil.

# Why Compost?

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- ▶ Improve physical structure of soil
  - ▶ Benefits both clay and sandy soils
  - ▶ Improves water retention
  - ▶ Improves aeration
  - ▶ Provides excellent growing conditions for many varieties of plants
  - ▶ Improve the biodiversity of organisms in your backyard
- ▶ Improves plant health
  - ▶ Healthy plants are more resistant to pests and diseases
  - ▶ pH buffer
  - ▶ Nutrient release over time



# How Does Compost Happen?

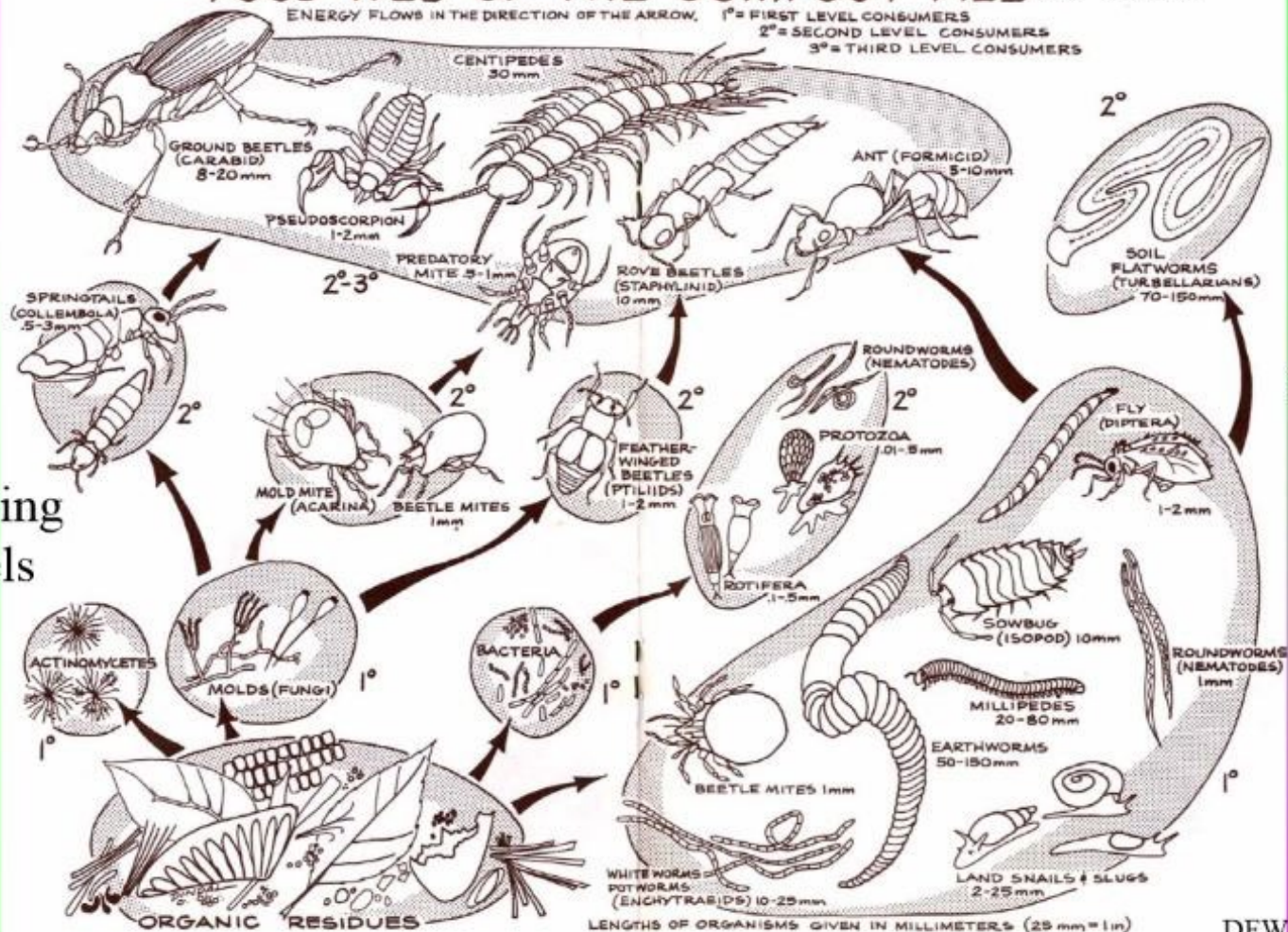
- ▶ We must create the optimal conditions for decomposers called the FBI...
  - ▶ Fungi
  - ▶ Bacteria
  - ▶ Invertebrates



# The Ecology of Soil Organisms

## FOOD WEB OF THE COMPOST PILE & Soils

ENERGY FLOWS IN THE DIRECTION OF THE ARROW. 1° = FIRST LEVEL CONSUMERS  
2° = SECOND LEVEL CONSUMERS  
3° = THIRD LEVEL CONSUMERS



Feeding Levels

Sizes

# Elements of Healthy Compost

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- ▶ Greens= Nitrogen
- ▶ Browns= Carbon
- ▶ Blues= Air, Water
  - ▶ 50:50 Ratio of Carbon : Nitrogen



# Not all compost is created equal!

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## Cold composting

- Higher yields, don't kill weeds

## Changing ratios

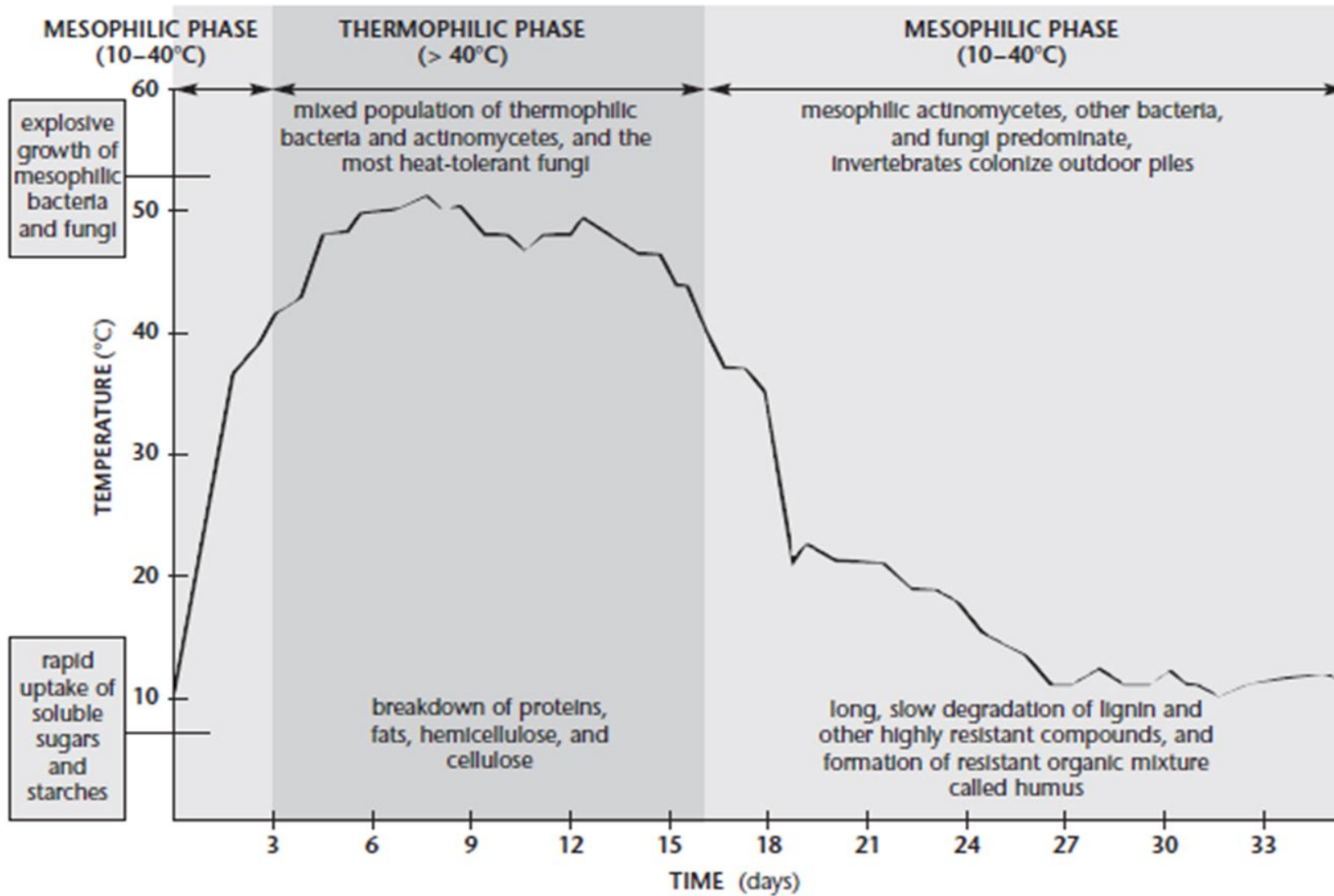
- Speed/quality

## Structural form of carbon

- Mature straw/stalks vs immature leaves/stalks will make longer lasting compost

## Quality of inputs

- Nutrient rich carbon vs paper, etc.



3 Stages of Aerobic Composting



# Types of Bins for Community Gardens

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Connection to the ground

Large enough for aerobic composting

3ft. X 3ft. 3ft. Minimum

Easily accessible

Not tucked away into a corner where people don't want to go...

# Suggested Tools

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## Pitchforks

- Manure or Compost Forks

## Shovels

- Flat shovel

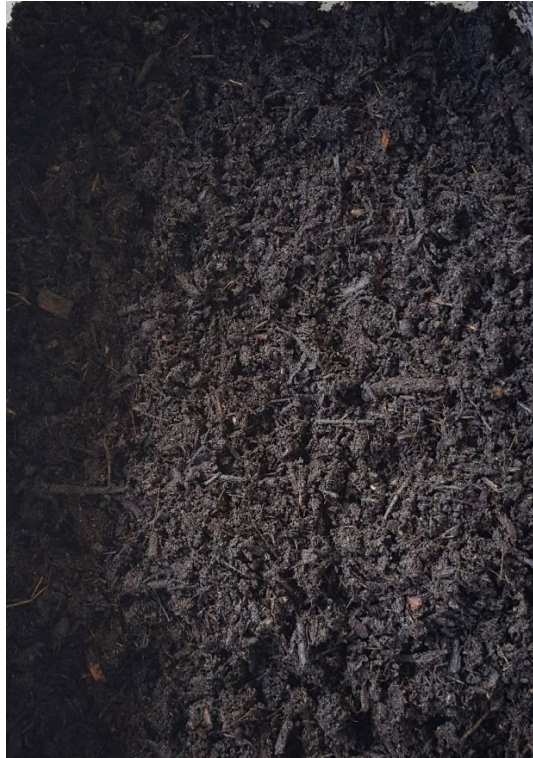
Wheelbarrow, buckets or trash cans

Screen

Compost Thermometer







# Contamination from Commercial and Residential Streams

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# Organics Collection

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# *Commercial Streams*



# Questions?

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## Master Composter Training Course

Join our FREE composting course for training in the art and science of composting through hands-on demonstrations, lectures, and more!

The course covers traditional composting, compost pile building, vermicomposting, soil health, bugs and compost, environmental impacts, and more!

COURSE	DATES	TIMES	REGISTRATION
Spring 2026	Tuesdays: April 7 through May 19	6:00-8:30 PM	Registration Opens March 2026
Summer 2026	Saturdays: August 15 through September 5	12:00-4:00 PM	Registration Opens July 2026
Fall 2026	Saturdays: October 3 through October 24	12:00-4:00 PM	Registration Opens September 2026

¡Traducción Disponible!

Katharine Leon  
Director of Operations  
Living Coast Discovery Center  
Katharine@thelivingcoast.org

Master Composter Training Course - The Living Coast Discovery Center