



Starting Small

Whether starting a new community composting site or re-thinking an existing one – it’s important to identify and understand the potential pinch points of your system and to plan accordingly.

Starting small means that any issues you might encounter as you work out your recipe and system management are also small.

Plan your operations according to whichever of the below is your limiting factor. You can always expand your operations as the above factors circumstances change.

Things to Consider Before Starting:

- ✓ System goals
- ✓ Location
- ✓ Available space
- ✓ Year-round accessibility
- ✓ People power
- ✓ Types of feedstock to accept and where to store them
- ✓ Assess volume of greens to browns
- ✓ Identify resources available

Think about:

What is the volume of food scraps (“greens”) you’re planning for?

- ✓ Does this match the amount generated by your participants?

Do you have access to enough carbon materials (“browns” to match the food scraps?)

- ✓ The recipe may vary by system, but three parts brown to one part green is a good rule of thumb.
- ✓ You always want to have MORE browns on hand, than you’ll need, as they’re your first line of defense if you have a problem with your recipe or system.

Do the volumes of your feedstocks (greens + browns) match your system capacity?

- ✓ It’s ALWAYS ok to start smaller than your system’s capacity, but remember – there’s some benefit to having a large enough volume to keep things cooking.

How does this match up with your human capacity?

- ✓ It’s easy to forget about this piece – but both your system AND the volume of organics that you’re managing need to match the people-power of your site.
- ✓ Some systems, like windrows, require either mechanized equipment or lots of volunteers; other systems, like tumblers or bins, can be managed by just a few people.

Remember that when expanding, another round of training will be needed – whether increasing the number of people bringing food scraps to your site, adding new volunteers to the management team, or both!

Pro Tip for the Bin System: Many bin designs are engineered so that additional bins can be easily added to expand your system. When setting up the layout of your site, keep this in mind and, if possible, allow some extra space for future expansion.

Other Community Composting Tip Sheets to reference: [Site Plan](#), [Site Design](#); [Compost Recipe Overview](#); [Process Management](#), [Volunteer Job Planning & Recruitment](#), [Systems & Operation](#). Written with funding from a USDA Rural Utilities Solid Waste Management Grant. NERC is an equal opportunity employer and provider.