



www.revelstokebearaware.org

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Composting in Bear Country

Most commercially available composters are not bear-proof. Compost that smells will attract bears, but properly maintained compost will not smell. To compost correctly there are a few things that you must do:

1. Never add meat, fish, dairy products, oil, unrinsed eggshells, cooked food, or large amounts of fruit. These items will attract bears and other animals long before they decompose.
2. Always layer kitchen waste between a layer of dry leaves or other brown material.
3. Ensure the compost is kept moist, like that of a wrung out sponge. If the contents are too dry, it will take overly long to decompose and if too wet, the contents may begin to smell.
4. Aerate your compost on a regular basis with a pitchfork. Composting is an aerobic process. The microorganisms and fungi at work require oxygen to break down the organic material.
5. Don't place your compost close to a door, but ensure that you do have clear sight lines as you approach your composter. If a bear does come to your compost, you don't want to startle him.
6. Sprinkle ash or lime into your compost if it does start to smell.

When getting started, it is important to establish your compost correctly. If a bear has visited in the past, and been rewarded with easy food, they will likely revisit. There have been cases where bears have learned to identify the black dome composters as a food source and have even gone after new empty composters.

Compost with extra care during the fall when bears are most actively searching for food. Avoid adding a large amount of kitchen scraps at this time, instead place these scraps in the freezer until the bears have started denning (November) or move to an indoor worm composting system.

For more information on indoor composting visit www.cityfarmer.org/wormcomp61.html.

Remove or properly manage other bear attractants on your property such as garbage, fruit trees, livestock, pet food, birdseed, and BBQ's.