

COMPOST RAW MATERIALS

Manures and Green Manures

Why should manures be composted before application?

- Raw manure can lose large percentages of their nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium in storage and handling. Composting breaks down these nutrients into more stable humus complexes.
- Raw manure is high in nitrate that selects for weed growth. Nitrates are also very readily leached. Compost immobilizes the nitrate by storing it in non-leachable forms.
- Uncomposted manures release ammonia, which has been shown to damage roots. Ammonia is also lost to the atmosphere through volatilisation.
- Manures may be high in salts. Composting can decompose salts by putting them into the structure of bacteria and fungi, thereby removing the osmotic effect.
- Uncomposted manures may contain weed seeds that can be spread into your orchards if they are not killed by the high temperatures in the composting process

Green Manures

Adding fresh green materials to the initial starting mix of a compost windrow is very important. Green materials help to kickstart the development of a healthy aerobic composting process. Green manures are high in nitrogen and by incorporating a suitable amount of green material into the mix, the requirement for animal manures is reduced.

There are a number of different green manures that you can cultivate and harvest to include in your compost. Amongst others these include various legumes, wattle, *leucaena* sp., grasses, clover grass, comfrey etc.