



BOKASHI COLD COMPOSTING

Bokashi Bucket Composting Instructions

It's pretty simple to make a serviceable bokashi composting bucket yourself. Here are 3 options. Choose what will work best for you.

1. One-bucket system: you can do this in only one bucket – just be sure that you drain foods before adding them to the bucket to keep the liquid content to a minimum. Depending on the amount of food waste you generate in a week, use a 3 or 5 gal bucket.

2. Two nesting 3-5-gallon bucket system. Here's how:

- On the bottom of one bucket, drill 20 to 30 holes with a 1/8 to 1/4 inch drill bit.
- Set the drilled bucket into the other bucket, which you have not drilled holes in.
- Cover the bucket with a tight-fitting lid. Usually, you will find matching lids near the buckets in the home center. Or, use 2 recycled matching buckets.

This basic system doesn't have a spigot, but it would be easy enough to harvest any liquid by lifting the top bucket off of the bottom bucket, and pouring any liquid that has collected in the bottom bucket into a separate container to be used as compost tea.

3. Bucket with a spigot: if you want a spigot, you can find the spigots & gaskets at most hardware stores and home centers for less than ten dollars. Be sure when you attach the spigot to get a good fit so that it doesn't leak (they will often do it for you right at the store).

As soon as you have your preferred system, start adding your food scraps and bokashi to the bucket.

BOKASHI IS A NATURAL COMPOST ACCELERATOR made from wheat bran, EM-1 (Effective Microbes), molasses, and non-chlorinated water.

A few tips for using this cold composting system:

- The bucket needs to be air-tight for the contents to ferment properly. Remember, bokashi cold composting is an anaerobic (no oxygen) system.
- If you find that the lid you've purchased doesn't fit as tightly as you'd like, place a cloth or old t-shirt over the top of the bucket, and then snap the lid on. The extra bit of fabric will make the bucket airtight.

Basic instructions for bokashi cold composting:

- Put ½ cup of bokashi in the bottom of your bucket. This initial process is the “fermenting or pickling” of your food waste. By adding bokashi to the bucket with your food waste, a fermenting process takes place. Your food waste will not change much in appearance, but the internal structure is transformed. Much like a cucumber becoming a pickle.
- After each meal, add food scraps to your bucket and sprinkle with 1-2 Tablespoons of bokashi. Close lid tightly.
- Do this each day until bucket is full. Keep liquids to a minimum. It’s more difficult to “ferment” food waste if there is lots of liquid. If you have a double-bucket system, or a spigot system, you can drain off liquid, which can be diluted 1-1 with non-chlorine water and used as a compost tea (fertilizer or to spray on your plants). If you are only using one bucket, drain foods before you add them to your compost bucket.
- When your bucket is full, top off with ½ cup of bokashi, close lid tightly, write date on top and allow to “ferment” for 2 weeks. If it goes longer, that’s fine, it just stays in a fermented state. However, check it at 2 weeks to make sure it smells like vinegar or has a “pickled” odor. White mold is good – black mold is not – the odor is the key.
- Next step (see pictures following): trench in your garden or yard about 4-8 inches down OR put all “fermented” material in your garden bed, cover with dirt. In 30 days, when you’re ready to plant, you won’t have any pickled material left – it will be all dirt.
- If you have an outdoor compost bin, you can simply add the fermented material to your bin, cover with dead grass, leaves, straw, dirt – any “carbon” material and it will continue to transform into “good dirt” in about 30-60 days. No turning!

The Proof Is In The Soil



The contents of the Bokashi Bucket emptied into the garden trench.



The garden trench after 30 days.



Contents of the Bokashi Buckets placed in bottom of raised bed garden plot in April



Garden soil placed on top of the contents of the Bokashi Buckets



By planting time in May, all the fermented food waste from the Bokashi Buckets had become “good dirt” and the garden was planted.

Problems or questions: Call Captain Compost @ 406-868-2359 or check the Gardens From Garbage website www.gardensfromgarbage.org. We welcome questions and your experiences.

Bokashi can be purchased from Captain Compost (Michael) at 406-868-2359 (M-Sat 9-6) or at the Great Falls Community Food Bank at 452-9029 (M-F 8-1).

Bokashi prices: 1# - \$5, 5# - 22.50, 20# - \$80. For home composting, 1# should last several months, depending on the amount of food waste you are composting.

We compost all year round. In the winter, you can continue to do bokashi composting in a closed container: either an insulated compost bin in your backyard, or in a “soil factory” in your basement (see website www.gardensfromgarbage.org for instructions – search “soil factory”).

Bokashi Versus Traditional Composting

	Bokashi	Traditional Composting
<i>Process</i>	fermentation	heat/oxidation
<i>Metabolism</i>	anaerobic	aerobic
<i>Time</i>	30-90 days depending on method used	180 - 365 days
<i>Biomass Limits</i>	None	meat, dairy, fats
<i>Produces Greenhouse Gases</i>	no	yes
<i>Maintenance</i>	low (no turning, no watering)	high (must turn and water)
<i>Nutrient Value of End Product</i>	high	low to moderate
<i>Pathogens Killed By</i>	acidity	heat