

## Bokashi Composting Tip Sheet

### ? Did You Know?

57% of the garbage going to landfill from Calgary homes could be composted<sup>1?</sup> 22% is yard waste and the other 35% is food waste. These materials contribute to methane gas and leachate pollution in the landfill. Compost these items at home and create a nutrient rich soil amendment to use in your yard and garden instead!

### Bokashi Basics

Bokashi is a Japanese term meaning “fermented organic matter” and refers to a 2-step method of indoor composting that uses beneficial micro-organisms to quickly ferment many types of food waste.

Bokashi is a great option for food waste for those living in apartments/condos. It's fairly easy to maintain, affordable, can use most food scraps (including meat and dairy) and provides a great soil amendment for your garden.

#### Materials Needed

- 5 gallon bucket with tight fitting lid
- Absorbent material (peat moss, shredded newspaper, sandust)
- Bokashi starter mix
- Food scraps chopped into small pieces

1. **What's in Calgary's garbage? (2014).** Retrieved October 24, 2014 from <http://www.calgary.ca/UEP/WRS/Pages/City-initiatives/Calgarys-Garbage.aspx>

### Bokashi Starter Instructions:

Store your bucket in a cool (not cold) dark dry spot in your home. Before you start adding food waste, put about an inch or two of absorbent at the bottom of your bucket. Then sprinkle a small handful (2-3 Tbsp) of Bokashi Starter Mix. Now you're ready to start collecting your food waste!

1. **COLLECT** your food waste (chopped into small pieces) in a bowl without a lid.
2. **DUMP** the bowl contents into your Bokashi bucket (before food starts to rot/smell).
3. **SQUISH** with a plate, potato masher, or similar to remove air pockets.
4. **SPRINKLE** a small handful of Bokashi Starter Mix over the waste (approx. 2-3 Tbsp).
5. **CLOSE** by replacing the lid for an air-tight seal,

Repeat until your Bokashi bucket is full, then set it aside with the AIR TIGHT LID for 10 -14 days so that the last waste you put in has a chance to fully ferment and then start a new bucket. Your finished Bokashi won't look like compost or soil; instead it should be fermented and indistinguishable food waste without any offensive odours.

Once your Bokashi is ready, break it up and add it to your backyard composter. Or, if you want to use it as a soil amendment, dig an area of about 4 square feet and bury your finished Bokashi approx. 1/2 a foot deep (break it up into a thin layer) and cover with at least 2 inches of soil. Keep the area moist (not overly wet) until you are ready to plant (wait a minimum of 10 days before planting as the soil can be quite acidic at first).



### ✔ What You Can Put In Your Bokashi:

- Fruit & vegetable scraps (skins, cores, & all)
- Cooked foods (minimize oils, sauces, & fats)
- Meat, fish, bones, egg shells, nuts
- Coffee grounds & filters (avoid bleached filters)
- Tea leaves, tea bags (remove staples)
- Rice, pasta, bread, beans
- Dairy products including cheese, yogurt, etc.
- Wooden cutlery & popsicle sticks

\* add more starter with high protein scraps like dairy/meat.

### ✘ What Not To Put In Your Bokashi:

- Liquids such as soups, milk, juice, etc.
- Thick bones or shells, large pieces of meat/fish
- Moulding or rotting waste
- Medicines, vitamins or other pills
- Diapers, pet waste, cigarette butts
- Any non-organic materials like metal, glass, etc.
- Avoid cardboard, paper & paper products\*

\* use shredded newspaper only when an absorbent is needed.

## Bokashi Composting Tip Sheet

### ✓ Some Helpful Tips

**Before adding any waste to the collection bowl**, be mindful of size and moisture. It is very difficult to adjust size and moisture later and it is even worse if you have to deal with a bucket of rotting waste caused by a careless (and easily avoidable) mistake made early on. Ensure you chop or cut dense scraps into a manageable size.

**Avoid adding wet items** (fruit, fresh veg, soups, some dairy) unless you remove what excess moisture you can, and add some dry waste to balance out the moisture level.

**Troubleshooting your Bokashi:** your Bokashi may release a foul odour, if it's too wet; you haven't used enough starter, you've added rotten waste; or the lid didn't create an air-tight seal. The important thing is not to panic as there are some quick ways to bring it back into balance:

- 1. The best approach** is to first make sure your waste is compacted, add 2 handfuls of Bokashi Starter Mix, seal the lid and put aside for a day or two.
- 2. If that doesn't solve the problem**, then sprinkle a handful of dry molasses or granular sugar over the contents of the bucket and wait another day.
- 3. If your Bokashi bucket does not improve** after that – something is definitely wrong that may not be easily rectified at this point. We recommend that you bury the contents somewhere out of the way and a little deeper than normal (as it is now an animal attractant). The mess will eventually breakdown but leave it to enrich the soil over several months.
- 4. Once you have emptied the fermented waste;** give your bucket a good wash with soap and water and leave it in the sun to remove any odours.

**A healthy Bokashi bucket does not create bad odours**, greenhouse gas, or heat and is completely natural. What you should smell when you open the bucket is a slightly sweet, fermented (sour), perhaps slightly alcoholic odour and it should not be offensive.

#### What to do with finished Bokashi:

When your Bokashi bucket is full of fermented waste that is ready to use, you have a few options:

Bury it in the Garden: dig an area of about 4 square feet and bury your finished Bokashi approx. 1/2 a foot deep (break it up into a thin layer) and cover with at least 2 inches of soil. Keep this area moist (not overly wet) prior to planting (please wait a minimum of 10 days after you've buried your Bokashi before planting as the soil can be quite acidic at first).

- 1. Compost Accelerant:** Simply break up the fermented waste and roughly mix it into your backyard compost pile.
- 2. Making Your Own Potting Soil:** To create your own soil factory you will need a large open container or tub. First add a layer of used soil (20 litres), then dump in the contents of your Bokashi bucket and break apart the waste. Next add another 20 litres of soil and mix it into the fermented waste. Finally top off with another 20 litres of soil and ensure that all the contents are moist but not wet. After a few weeks you will have a good supply of an amazing nutrient rich potting soil.

*Give your bucket a good wash with soap and water and leave it in the sun to remove any odours.*



- 3. Feed Supplement:** Your fermented waste is a great probiotic feed supplement for chickens, pigs, and worms – and they will love it! Just remember that it is quite acidic at first so start them off slow by introducing a bit at a time.
- 4. Wait:** Or you can just leave your bucket of fermented waste (up to 6 months) till you are ready to dump it. This can be useful during a long winter – and if you need to use your bucket in the mean time you can simply transfer the contents to a large garbage bag, close it up, leave it in the snow and wait for spring.

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100, 301-14th St NW Calgary, AB, T2N 2A1  
403-230 1443 ex 222 | [info@greencalgary.org](mailto:info@greencalgary.org)

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