

10-8-2010

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Recommended Citation

Redden, Chad (2010) "Composting," *Booth*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 7 , Article 2.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/booth/vol2/iss7/2>

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Abstract

Composting requires time.

It also requires a level of space away from the house, out of direct sunlight, but accessible for watering, preferably by garden hose. Composting requires water.

Keywords

compost, microbes, survivor, mourning



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Composting

by Chad Redden

Composting requires time.

It also requires a level space away from the house, out of direct sunlight, but accessible for watering, preferably by garden hose. Composting requires water.

Once you have found a location for your compost pile, you must layer the compost materials like lasagna. This should be easy to envision. After all, you made him lasagna so often—at least once a month, right?

Begin the bottom layer with his books. They take up space you could use for porcelain angels and they tempt you to read them. Already, you've spent a few years examining their spines, hoping they would provide answers as to why he slept under them on the couch while dead bluesmen mumbled in low tones on the stereo, instead of sharing a bed with you. To accelerate the process, shred the books to pieces, and combine with soil and worms.

The next layer: his t-shirts and jeans that you still haven't washed, the ones you arrange on the bed in the shape of his body. Stuff these with his old baseball cards, cassette tapes, Dali prints, and fishing lures. Put the scarecrow on the pile.

Add collection notices for the ambulance, emergency room, the funeral home, and the cemetery that still arrive in the mailbox. Make sure they are dry: excess

water will slow the process of decomposition by inhibiting nitrogen production. Remember, composting requires a perfect balance of nitrogen to facilitate the activity of microbes. Refrain from adding autumn leaves; these will be required later.

The next layer should be kitchen scraps. Do not add lasagna. It will release a foul smell into the air, attracting scavenger animals, who will dig up the whole pile, which is the last thing you need. It should be safe, though, to add the doughnuts you carried home from the survivors' meetings. Clutching them may have kept you from scratching your wrist raw when it was your turn to speak, but now it is too late to eat them and they are attracting mice and roaches to your bedroom.

Do NOT add the styrofoam cups and cigarette butts from those meetings into your compost pile. Even with time, worms, nitrogen, and water, these items will only corrupt the final product. In fact, you yourself should drink lots of water. It will flush your system of those toxins. I'm surprised your therapist hasn't suggested something similar.

Finally, when they arrive, cover the pile with autumn leaves and the shards of a shattered porcelain angel. This will create a nice cap for the heat produced by the pile, pushing warmth downward and stimulating the activity of microbes, those fantastic workhorses of decomposition.

Chad Redden currently lives in Indianapolis where he attends IUPUI as an undergraduate student majoring in Creative Writing. His work has appeared in analog and digital publications such as Allegheny Review, Escape into Life, Fiore, Bianncle, Genesis and Angelic Dynamo.

PUBLISHED: October 8, 2010

FILED UNDER: Uncategorized

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