

FARMER TO FARMER - PRACTICES FOR RESILIENCE SERIES

MAKING COMPOST **-THE ATOLL SOIL MEDICINE**

Composts or black gold is celebrated the world over for its soil revitalising powers. Rich in nutrients, compost is organic matter that is decomposed.

Atoll soil is low in nutrients crucial for healthy plant growth and crop yields – nitrogen and potassium. Organic farmers in Marshall Islands treat compost as soil medicine for better soil organic matter and nutritional content. Atoll soil is sandy and retains water poorly. Coupled with extreme weather events like droughts that may increase in severity due to climate change, farming is tough. Composts improve the water retention capacity of soils.

Ingredients:

COMPOST



Brown Leaves
(brown layer):
Source of carbon, helps get air into the compost pile. Can also be dry, woody chips.



Green (green layer): Grass clippings or other green materials, shredded so it decomposes faster. Rich in nitrogen.



Water:
Microorganisms that break down the organic materials need it to survive. Not too much water or they drown.



Copra Cake:
Leftover dried coconut meat. Feeds the microbes (bacteria, fungi) that decompose the material

Step 1



Make compost using readily available materials around your home. For the base of the compost pile, use old piece of plywood. Use a cinder block (6 inches high or 15 cm) to mark the height of the brown and green layers.

Step 2 - Brown Layer



Spread out brown layer materials (dead leaves or wood chippings). Brown, dead organic materials give carbon back into the soil. This layer must be six inches or 15 cm high, as high as the cinder block. Water well.

or



Dead coconut leaves are used here. You can also use other brown leaves like breadfruit leaves.

Step 3
Copra Cake



Add three shovels of copra cake to the brown material. Mix and water well.

3 X

Add a layer of green materials (grass clippings). It must be six inches or 15cm high. Mix in with brown and copra cake using a garden rake. Water well.



Step 4
Green Layer

Step 5
Copra Cake

Add another two shovels of copra cake to the heap. Water and mix well.



Step 6
Cover

Cover with another piece of ply or tarpaulin suspended over the compost pile to keep it safe from excessive rain and to maintain the temperature. A spot with direct sunlight is suitable for the compost pile. Turn over pile with a digging fork every week. Compost should be ready in two months.

This info sheet has been produced with the support of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Capacity Building for Resilient Agriculture in the Pacific Project and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) Youth Leading Learning in Resilient Agriculture Practices project in partnership with the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (PCETCom) the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Marshall Islands Organic Farming Association (MIOFA).

