Concrete block bins are durable, require few tools, and can handle large amounts of yard materials. Growing vines around the outside of these bins can soften their more "industrial" appearance. The following plans are for a one-bin unit (figure 1) or three-bin unit (figure 2). To make a two-bin unit, simply leave the third section off of the three-bin unit.

Block bins can be used as turning or holding bins. Turning or mixing will make the materials compost much faster. There are two ways to use the three-bin unit as a turning bin.

The first method is to build a compost pile in one end section, transfer the materials to the middle after a time, and then later transfer them to the third section.

The second method is to build two compost piles, one in each end section. Transfer materials from one section to the middle section and then back to original end section. Repeat the process for the pile in the other end section.
How to construct

**MATERIALS**

**1-bin composter**
- 38 concrete blocks (8" wide)
- Five 4'-long metal posts
- Chisel
- Work gloves
- Level
- Shovel
- Hammer or mallet

**3-bin composter**
- 86 concrete blocks (8" wide)
- Four half concrete blocks (8" wide)
- Eleven 4'-long metal posts
- Chisel
- Work gloves
- Level
- Shovel
- Hammer or mallet

Half blocks can be purchased or split from full blocks. Figure 3 shows a full concrete block with a central slit between the holes that makes it easy to split it into two half blocks. Score each side of the block in the plane of the slit with a chisel. Then use the chisel and a hammer to split the block along the score.

### CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

1. Before you start construction of your bin, pick a good spot for it in your yard. The spot should be relatively level and not a location where water may pool or collect. Place concrete blocks on the ground, as shown in figure 4. For the base course, you will use 11 blocks for a one-bin unit or 25 blocks for a three-bin unit. Leave about a ½" between each block to let air in.

2. Add a second layer of blocks, staggering them to increase stability. Note the placement of the two half blocks (shaded) in the three-bin unit (figure 2).

3. Add a third layer of blocks, again staggering them to increase stability.

4. Add the last or top layer, staggering the blocks. Note the placement of the two half blocks (shaded) in the three-bin unit (figure 2).

5. To make the unit more stable, drive metal posts through the holes in the blocks as shown (figures 1 and 2).

Now you are ready to start using your bin and begin composting! Simply mix one part green (nitrogen) materials with two parts brown (carbon) materials (table 1), keep the materials as damp as a wrung-out sponge, and use a small shovel, pitchfork, or garden fork to mix the contents from time to time.

**Figure 3.** Concrete block detail showing the central slit

**Figure 4.** First layer of concrete blocks for the 3-bin unit

*Source: Adapted with permission from Composting to Reduce the Waste Stream (NRAES-43), Cornell Cooperative Extension.*
TABLE 1. Materials for composting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brown materials (2 parts)</th>
<th>Green materials (1 part)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Dry leaves</td>
<td>• Green leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Twigs less than ¼” in diameter</td>
<td>• Grass clippings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shredded newspaper</td>
<td>• Weeds (before they have gone to seed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shredded household cardboard: egg cartons, paper towel, and toilet paper rolls</td>
<td>• Leftover plants at the end of the season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Coffee grounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fruit and vegetable scraps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Eggshells</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do not compost: Meat, bones, grease, whole eggs, dairy products, diseased or highly invasive plants, pet waste.

Resources

For more information on composting, including the Wisconsin Master Composter Program, contact:

**Solid & Hazardous Waste Education Center (SHWEC)**
www.uwex.edu/ces/shwec
Joe Van Rossum, Recycling Specialist
joseph.vanrossum@ces.uwex.edu
608-262-0385

**Composting to Reduce the Waste Stream (NRAES-43)**
Plants and Life Sciences Publishing (PALS), Cornell Cooperative Extension
http://palspublishing.cals.cornell.edu/nra_order.taf?function=detail&pr_booknum=nraes-43

**Master Composter Resource Manual**
Cornell Waste Management Institute
cwmi.css.cornell.edu/mastercompostermanual.pdf

These publications are available from the Learning Store (learningstore.uwex.edu):
- Compost (A4021)
- Do-It-Yourself Compost Bins series
  - Barrel Composter (G4020-01)
  - Can Composter (G4020-02)
  - Concrete Block Composter (G4020-03)
  - Wire Mesh Composter (G4020-04)
  - Wood and Wire Composter (G4020-05)
  - Wood Pallet Composter (G4020-06)
  - Wood 3-Bin Composter (G4020-07)

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