

Backyard Organic Waste Management - Digester Information

1. Where should I put my digester?

The digester should be:

- Exposed to the sun as much as possible
- In a convenient and accessible spot for all seasons
- In a well-drained area
- In an area you can dig a 3-foot hole
- Away from your well, septic system, and any underground wire/cable.

2. What organic material can go into a digester?

Kitchen Waste:

- Cooked food
- Baked goods
- Coffee grounds, filters and tea bags
- Dairy
- Eggs and shells
- Green yard clippings, plants and leaves
- Meat and bones
- Raw fruits and vegetables



Do not put bio-degradable/compostable plastics (bags, cups, take out containers, utensils, etc.) into your digester. They will not break down but will create a watertight layer that will stop the whole process from working.

3. How do I start my digester?

Install the digester and then simply start adding kitchen waste. Limit meat/bone/fish input for the first 4-6 weeks until the digester is established.

4. How do I manage my digester?

The digester does not need any maintenance. Simply add your kitchen waste. If the digester starts to get full and the material is not breaking down fast enough use an enzyme revitalizer (used for septic systems) to speed up the breakdown of materials, or move the digester to a new location. Do not allow the digester to fill above ground level. It becomes very tricky to move.

5. Can I harvest compost from a digester?

No. Digesters are designed to stay in one place and breakdown materials quickly. If working optimally you shouldn't have to move the digester for several years (results depend on usage). We recommend you use a traditional composter if you are looking for compost soil.

6. Why is my digester not doing anything?

Ensure that quantities of leaf and yard waste in your digester are limited.

Do not use plastic materials of any type – even “compostable” or “biodegradable”.

Cut up organics in to smaller pieces to speed up the breakdown of materials. For example, rather than putting a whole watermelon in your digester, cut it into quarters.

Slowly add materials to your digester, especially when you first install it. Add a small pail every other day or so, rather than a large amount once a week.

7. Why does my digester smell?

Digesters smell because they are going through an anaerobic (no oxygen) break down process. The smell is not harmful and means your digester is working. Keeping the lid on tight helps to contain the smell and limits oxygen getting into the system ensuring the process continues correctly.

8. How do I avoid animal issues?

Ensure the lid of the digester is closed tightly. Add deterrents like strong spices (example: paprika, cumin, etc.) or moth balls around the outside of the digester. Once the animal tastes or smells the deterrent they will likely avoid it in the future.

Also limit other animal attractants on your property such as dirty barbecues, bird feeders, pet food or citronella candles. These items can bring animals to your property, helping them discover to discover the digester.

9. How do I reduce fruit flies and bugs?

Empty your kitchen catcher often or store your waste in the fridge/freezer. Do not let organics start to decompose in your kitchen. Rinse out kitchen bin after emptying with a water and vinegar solution.

10. How do I get rid of fruit flies?

You can make your own fruit fly trap by using a container, saran wrap, soap and fruit or liquor. Fill the container with aged fruit, beer or wine. Add a small amount of soap. Tightly saran wrap the top of your container. Poke small holes in the top of the saran wrap using a pin or needle. The fruit flies fly in through the holes, become trapped and are killed by the soap added. Clean out container every couple of days and keep it out until you no longer see fruit flies around the house.

11. Diagram on how to use a digester

