

FOOD WASTE BURIAL

Food Digestion can use holes, trenches or digesters

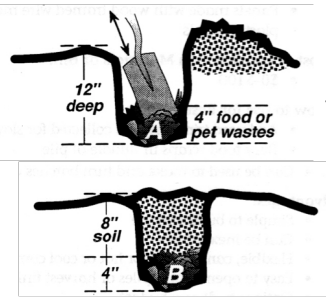
How does this type of composting work?

Food Digestion is a well established composting method that has been used in Ireland for many years. Often referred to as 'trenching', it involves the breakdown of vegetative food scraps when buried in the ground. Food Digesters are a newer way of digesting food but works on the same principles – bury your food waste in the ground and allow worms and other decomposing micro-organisms take care of it. To bury vegetative food scraps (trenching) you need a medium to large garden but digesters take up little space so are ideal for homes with small gardens. As with all other forms of composting, digestion needs a mix of **greens** and **browns** so sawdust, shredded paper or cardboard can be used to absorb moisture, balance nutrients, control odours and create a barrier against flies.

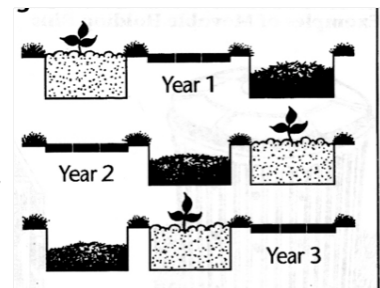


Digesters are partially buried containers that use the sun's heat to encourage bacteria growth within the compost system. You build a digester or buy commercial ones like the Green Cone. The unit, which above ground looks like a regular compost bin, comes with a round basket, fine meshing wire, a green cone with a black tub fitted within it, a kitchen caddy and bacteria activator. To install your digester you will need to dig a hole wide and deep enough to fit the basket surrounded by the fine meshing wire so that they are level with the grounds surface. Back fill around the basket with sand and finally secure the digester onto the basket above the ground. A sunny spot in the garden is recommended for your digester. Food wastes are added to the cone where it falls into the underground basket to be digested by the organisms living in the surrounding soil. Any plants growing nearby will get the benefit of the nutrients released by the decomposing food waste.

To bury vegetative food scraps you can either dig a **hole** or use a trench. If using a hole, dig down about



12" deep and add 4" of vegetative food scraps. Then chop and mix the food scraps into the soil at bottom of the hole – this is the key. Then cover over with the remainder of the soil. Depending on the soil temperature, the supply of micro-organisms and the content of the materials, decomposition can take between 1 month to a year. **Trenching** works on the same principle as the holes. Trenches are dug and used until filled. Then a new trench is started and you can start planning into the first trench. The following graphic shows a 3 year rotation system for trenching.



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What are the advantages and disadvantages of this system?

Advantages	Disadvantages
Can handle a constant supply of food scraps	Needs good draining soils
Only need to be emptied every 1-2 years	Ongoing cost as you will need to purchase activator powder, though manure will also work

There are few problems with cats, dogs or rodents with these types of compost system as the waste is buried.

