



A Small Waterfall Composter

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Small gardens call for small composting facilities. In my case a very small facility. After having tried woven sacks and finding them unsatisfactory I built the small composter seen in the picture's center. It simply consists of a basket suspended in a frame - in my case a wooden frame - with room under it for a runoff container. Runoff is created by gently pouring water over the basket's decomposing content, after punching a few holes into it from the top downwards with a rod or stick if required. So this is the waterfall and it's operated manually. The chlorine free water which is poured over it seeps through the charge and becomes a mild compost extract, collected in the removable container underneath. From there it's taken and used as a liquid fertilizer. Should a stronger solution be desired the same amount of water can be passed repeatedly through the compost charge.

This way, even a compost quantity that small - about 32 Liter/8 Gallons - can yield fertilizer on a daily basis. Also, once from every few weeks to every few months the whole affair is turned upside down and the finished - or semi finished - compost is screened off with 5/8" chicken wire (15mm). Then, the remaining material is filled back into the composter and any necessary adjustments to the mix are made.

As the material keeps on shrinking, new stuff is added almost every day. I always chop up the material as this helps with the composting process and with handling later.

Of course, with a setup of this kind and this small the composting process is more dependent on environment temperature than classic bins. In hot weather You can watch the charge as it shrinks from day to day.

All parameters are easily controlled: producing extract keeps it moist, during heavy rains a cap can keep off the water, should it start to compact a rod can be worked through the basket to aerate it's content, every time compost is screened off it is automatically remixed and aerated. If correctly maintained there is never any smell even when one stands next to it.

The composter pictured above was built entirely from scrap I had laying around and, by the way so were the two growing towers to it's left and right. It didn't cost a single cent. Of course, the basket will be consumed ultimately, after two or three years, and this will provide an opportunity to further improve it's design.

Image (optional):

