

# Vermin Resistance

“What about rats?” is one of the most frequently asked questions we get at the CEC. So much so, we’ve made a handy factsheet for you! Many people compost in their backyard with no rodent problems whatsoever, including us here at the Centre. However, we recognize that vermin interference is a common barrier to composting, especially in our harbor city, so hopefully the tips and tricks below will help you out.

Essentially, the strategy for preventing rodents from entering a compost pile is to create a scenario where they don’t feel safe, aren’t attracted to food scraps, and can’t get into your bin by chewing through it. The roadmap for how to do this is below.

**Effort Scale:**

Easy	1	2	3	4	5	Hard	After initial set-up, requires attending to your compost regularly
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## Why might vermin show up in your compost pile?

Contrary to popular belief, rats and mice are not generally attracted to the food you put in your compost pile (please refer to Factsheet #1 for recommended items to keep out of your compost pile ). More often, they are attracted to the dry, relatively warm space a composter offers in which to hunker down for the winter. Raccoons, on the other hand, *are attracted to food*, which is why a locking lid is important.



## How do vermin get into your compost pile?

- They can chew through plastic and wood
- They dig underneath if there is no baseplate
- If no lid or no locking lid, they have free access from top



## Strategies for Vermin Resistance

### 1. Bin Location

Always locate your bin in an open area away from the sides of buildings. Vermin are less likely to get into your compost if they have to run across an open lawn where they are vulnerable to overhead predators.



### 2. Locking Lid & Baseplate

A bonus of both the Earth Machine and Greencone Food Waste Digester are their locking lids. Raccoons have very nimble fingers and if your lid isn’t heavy or locking, it’s likely to be opened by a scavenger. If you’ve built your own compost bin, we recommend a lid of plywood as it’s heavy enough to deter them.

### 3. 1/4 Inch Wire Mesh a.k.a “Hardware Cloth”

Hardware cloth is your best friend when it comes to boosting the rodent resistance of anything you are composting in! ¼ inch is the recommended size, as rats and mice are able to get their teeth around anything with larger holes. See Factsheet # 3 for how to wrap your Greencone Food Waste Digester.

Wrap hardware cloth around bottom of Earth Machine. Bend ends in opposite directions.



Hook ends together



Make sure all edges are covered.



**4. No-No's**

Avoid putting meat, dairy, grains, oils or bones in your backyard composter. These are the items that generally attract raccoons, rather than fruit and vegetable peels.



**6. Edges vs. Round**

Ever wonder why we sell the Earth Machine or why the Greencone Food Waste Digester is a cone? Less edges! Any edge equals a place where critters can get a purchase with their teeth. The round shape of both of these models helps prevent this. What about where there *are* a few edges? Wrap in 1/4" hardware cloth for extra protection!



**5. Regular Disturbance/Aeration**

If you are regularly aerating your composting pile, you are killing two birds with one stone –



regularly disturbing your compost pile sends a strong signal it is not a safe place to raise a family.

**7. Carbon Layer On Top**

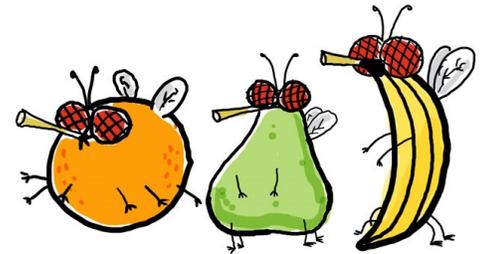
Lastly, always covering over your kitchen scraps with a layer of browns will help to filter out food smells and facilitate proper breakdown so your compost doesn't become smelly and attractive to rats or raccoons.



**A Note On Flies**

While we're talking about pests in the compost, let's take a minute to talk about flies. We often get calls from folks wanting to know how to "get rid of flies in the compost".

Fruit fly larvae are already in the peels of most everything we eat, and once they hit the warmth of your compost pile, they hatch into flies. We know that opening your compost to bin to a swarm of the little guys is annoying, perhaps even alarming. However, take comfort in the fact that everything has a season, especially in the gardening world. Fruit flies in your compost bin and/or digester in late August to late September are normal. We recommend opening the lid, quickly stepping back for a moment or two and then dumping your bucket once they've dispersed. In a compost bin, always leaving a layer of brown material on top will help to keep the flies down too.





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