

Turning Trash into Treasure...

Compost is the product of organic materials that have been broken down (decomposed) by microorganisms. These microorganisms are active when there is sufficient oxygen, warmth, and moisture in their environment. Regular dressings of compost – known to gardeners as 'black gold' – can significantly **improve the fertility of soil and the health of the plants in it by:**

- Helping hold moisture in the soil;
- Increasing aeration;
- Encouraging the activity of beneficial microorganisms and suppressing plant diseases;
- Breaking down slowly in the soil, providing steady nutrition for the plants

The first stage in making compost is to collect and chop up organic trash: dry leaves, mown grass and pruning (woody branches that have been removed from trees and shrubs). Ramat Hanadiv has two chopping machines: a large, stationary one used for branches brought in from the fields; and another, smaller and mobile one, used to shred pruning out in the fields.

The shredded material and coarse chips of wood are heaped onto elongated piles. During the winter, they are moistened by rain, and in the summer they are watered artificially in order to preserve the moisture necessary for the composting process.

At the start of this process and as a result of it, the temperature inside the piles rises to about 70-75° C. The temperature reaches a peak, then begins to go down. At this stage the piles are turned over, mixing and aerating them so that the oxygen needed for the decomposition process is more readily available. As soon as the piles are turned over, their temperature decreases and the process starts again: the temperature rises, then as the composting progresses the temperature gradually decreases until it's more or less the same as that in the environment. About six months later, the compost is 'cooked' and ready for use.

The primary reason for making compost at Ramat Hanadiv is to reduce the amount of trash that must be transported out of the park. Though compost is not produced here at the precisely controlled levels required of commercial factories, the principles of composting are observed. In commercial venues, strictly timed treatment of the compost piles shortens the decomposition process and increases the rate of production. No matter how it is produced, though, compost is a precious gift to the garden, resulting in healthy plants and beautiful flowers like the ones on view throughout Ramat Hanadiv.

