

A decorative border of tropical plants, including green ferns, large green leaves, and colorful flowers in shades of red, orange, and yellow, surrounds the central text.

Photoessay: My Grandmother's Composting Techniques

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This is the garden in my grandmother's place. It's filled with various flowering plants, herbs and fruit trees. My grandmother tends to the garden herself and enjoys being in the garden. Although my grandmother lives off a busy road, the garden is alive with the sounds of birds, bees and sometimes monkeys. Photo credits: Rammohan Aithal (my uncle).



**What goes into
the composting?**





The kitchen waste produced is collected and taken outside to the garden. Here, she transfers the fresh waste into a larger, composting bucket. The composting bucket is also filled with water that was used to wash rice and dal. **When asked about the smell associated, she simply laughed and said that it goes away in a day or so!** Photo credits: Rammohan Aithal (my uncle).



The kitchen waste is added to the composting bin each day, until it's full. Prior to composting, the kitchen waste is allowed to soak for 8-10 days. **My grandmother says that this soaking process helps her compost the waste better.** The kitchen waste in this picture still needs to be soaked for a few more days.





Beyond the waste from the kitchen, other materials from the garden also go into composting. Other major 'wet waste' components are green leaves (those which have been damaged by insects), weeds as well as fallen flowers and fruits.



Dry leaves, twigs and coconut husks are an important component for composting. My grandmother collects the dry, fallen leaves in the garden and stores them in large bins. She uses them for composting as required. **She says that she obtains enough dry leaves from her garden itself and doesn't need to go hunting for dry leaves!**

**Where and How does the
composting happen?**





Looking around the garden, the composting boxes are something that prominently stand out. However, my grandmother does not use these for composting. **She mentioned that somebody had gifted this to her as she composts.** However, she did not find them convenient to use for composting. Currently she just stores dry leaves in them!



My grandmother prefers composting in a quiet corner of the garden. I was lucky that the day I visited her, she was doing some composting! She starts off by digging up the soil where she had composted the last time. As she starts digging the lovely fragrance of wet soil/fresh earth fills the air.



When digging, the first thing that comes up is the half-composted waste. The waste no longer has any 'foul' smell associated with it. The waste hasn't simply decomposed; at this stage, twigs, leaves and corn cobs are still identifiable. To be fully composted, it will require another fortnight or so. It is collected and kept aside.



After the half-composted waste, the fully composted soil comes up. This she collects to be used around in the garden. My grandmother actually dug up quite a bit of fully composted soil. **She says that she digs up compost based on her requirements around the garden.**





The fully composted soil is used for her plants and trees in the garden. My grandmother says that the soil helps for the better growth of the plants. The compost is added in a specific manner – they are added such that they make a *katte* around each plant. **This, she says, will also help better water the plants and trees.**



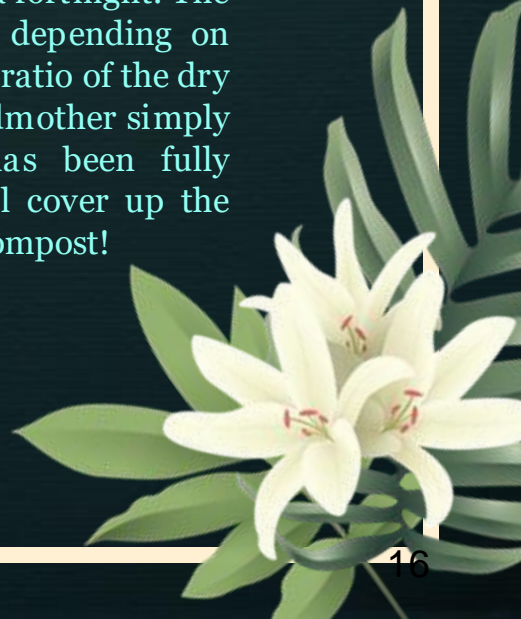
Once done with gardening, she collects the half-composted waste and puts it back in the compost pit. This goes in at the very bottom of the pit.

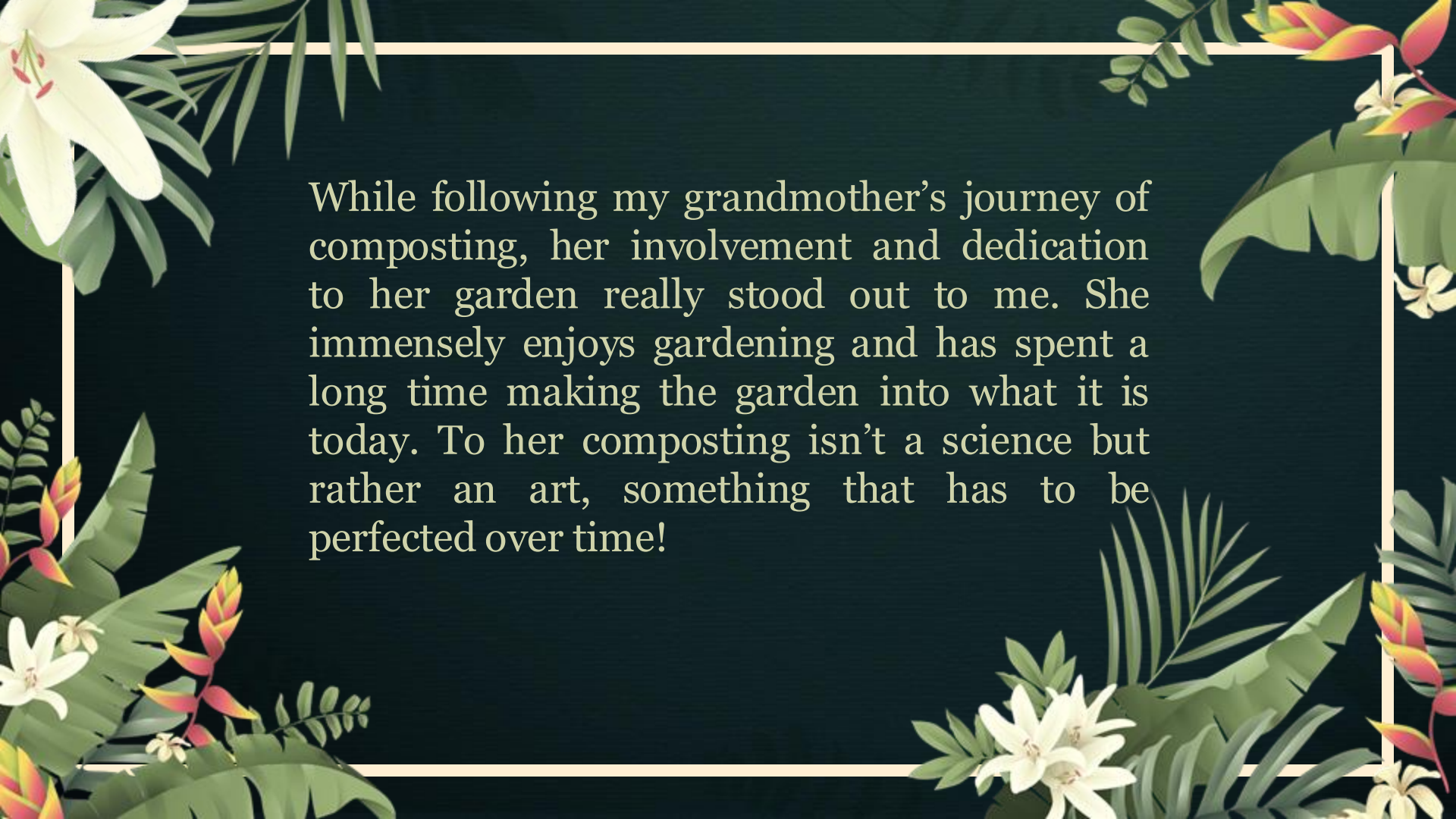


The half-composted waste is covered with fresh waste. This time it was primarily green leaves and fallen fruits from the garden. This is mixed with some dried leaves as well. **When asked about the ratio of wet waste to dry waste, she said she simply does it via an estimate which comes with practice.**




Finally, the composting pit is covered with some soil. The pit will be left undisturbed for at least a fortnight. The composting time varies depending on the season as well as the ratio of the dry and wet waste. My grandmother simply checks if the waste has been fully composted, else she will cover up the pit and leave it to fully compost!



The image features a central text block set against a dark green background. The text is framed by a thin, light-colored border. The corners and sides of the frame are decorated with various tropical plants and flowers, including white lilies, pink and yellow bromeliads, and green ferns. The overall aesthetic is lush and natural.

While following my grandmother's journey of composting, her involvement and dedication to her garden really stood out to me. She immensely enjoys gardening and has spent a long time making the garden into what it is today. To her composting isn't a science but rather an art, something that has to be perfected over time!



Thank you!

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