

Tumbling bin: Sun-Mar Continuous Composter

Size: 71 cm wide x 89 cm long x 117 cm high

Maximum capacity: 0.40 meters³ (14 feet³)

Price: \$500—550

Tester satisfaction: moderate

Features: Green plastic barrel with second internal chamber, end cap for opening or closing second chamber, plastic stand and handle attached to shaft-and-gear turning mechanism. Large sliding door for adding waste and three small vents for air exchange.

What you can put in it: Kitchen scraps (excluding meat, bones, dairy, and fats), leaves, grass clippings, other yard waste (excluding cat or dog waste).

“Yuck” factor: Low. Materials are neatly enclosed and break down without direct interaction.

Complexity to use: Moderate-to-low. Some knowledge of balancing ingredients and adding water is helpful.

In winter: Breakdown stops, the turning mechanism freezes up, and the lid may freeze shut. It is not recommended to keep using the Sun-Mar in winter.

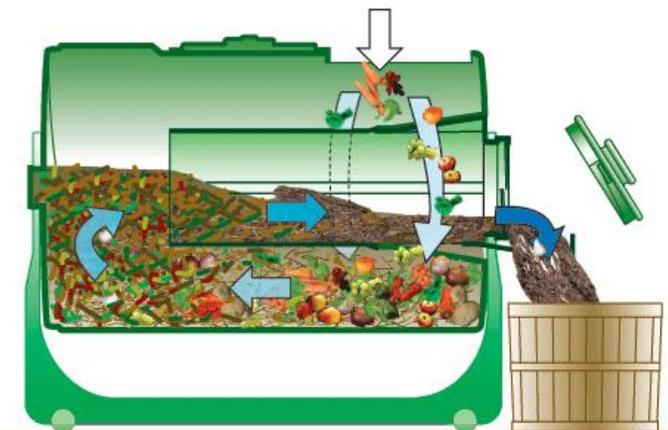
Mobility: The bin is easy to move on level surfaces as it has casters. It is difficult to move on soft or rough surfaces.

Available at: Seasonally at many retailers and online.

Tested by: **SARC**

SARC is a non-profit association representing community-based organizations that provide residential, developmental, and employment supports to individuals with disabilities. They have 27 staff at their main office building, and were looking for a way compost their food scraps and smaller amounts of yard waste onsite. They wanted a compost system that could go in their outdoor patio area, and which wouldn't cause trouble with insects or mice.

Employees took turns adding compost and turning the bin. While there was always someone around to tend the compost, no one in particular was responsible for it.



Results:

Testing period: May 2014—May 2015

Inputs:

- 1048 litres of organic waste (71% greens, 25% browns, 0% dirt or finished compost, 5% other)
- Added 120 litres of water
- Aerated 45 times for a total of 1 hour 11 minutes

Outputs:

- 70 litres of finished compost

Recommendations:

The Sun-Mar Continuous Composter is a decent composting option for small offices or businesses with a moderate amount of food waste or yard waste to process. Because it is off the ground and enclosed, it is rodent proof, which is important for many offices. The turning mechanism makes it easy to aerate even large loads. However it is quite expensive, and the “continuous” function of the design does not work as consistently as claimed. It is also difficult or impossible to use the bin in winter.

The Sun-Mar has two chambers; an outer one and an inner one. According to the manufacturers, materials will move through the chambers slowly and come out the end as finished compost. However SARC found that the compost that came out was not consistently finished, and had to sort some materials back into the bin.

In winter, SARC found that the lid, contents, and turning mechanism all froze up, making it impossible to add materials or turn.