

Composting

Why? What? How?

Common problems solved...

Composting



Worcestershire
Wildlife Trust

Environmental benefits:

- In a landfill site there is little to no oxygen so organic material decays anaerobically and produces methane
- In a compost bin, there is oxygen so decay is aerobic – no methane produced
- By composting your organic waste for a year, you could **save the same amount of greenhouse gas emission as your washing machine produces in three months!**
- Try collecting all compostable material from the kitchen for a week - you'll be surprised how slim your bin is!

Garden benefits

- Soil: adds structure, retains moisture, adds nutrients = all round good for soil health
- Plants: well nourished, strong growth, more resistant to pests & diseases
- Wildlife: no harmful chemicals
- Provides habitat & feeding station for beneficial creatures: hedgehogs, slow-worms and toads to name a few
- Compost bin is an ecosystem all of its own

Benefits to you:

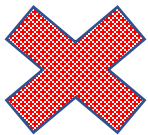
- Save money: don't need to buy soil improvers & mulches
- Save trips to the recycling centre

What

There are two types of compostable material:

Greens: fresh material eg vegetable peelings, grass clippings (rot quickly, generate heat & get the process zinging)

Browns: shredded paper, pure woollen jumpers, pet rabbit bedding (rot slowly & mop up the water)



Don't add meat, dairy, bones as these will attract rats or plastics and anything that won't breakdown.

How

- Aim for a mix of about 50:50 green: brown to get good decomposition
- Try to add material in layers to help get the mix right
- Chop material into smallish pieces
- Leaves and sticks thicker than a child's finger are best added to your habitat pile to rot slowly
- Make leaf mould: collect leaves in bin liner. Tie top, poke a few holes with a fork, leave somewhere for four years: wonderful for potting seedlings.
- Site for bin: somewhere sunny & easy to get to. There will be some fluid draining from the bin.

What bin?

There are lots of different shaped compost bins on the market. Most councils have a subsidised scheme. Choose one that suits your garden. Alternatively just lay material on the ground & cover with cardboard. You could consider doing this on soil where you want to grow plants – research 'lazy' or 'lasagne' bed gardening.

Composting takes time: 9–18 mths
When you empty your bin the material on top won't have rotted but dig down and you will find the good stuff. Throw anything that hasn't decomposed back into the bin.

Problems

Sometimes things don't go to plan:

- **Nasty smell, flies, lots of liquid:** Mix is too wet; add more browns eg shredded paper to soak up the moisture. Also check no meat / dairy has been added. Check site of bin - can water drain?
- **Nothing is rotting:**
- Dig down to check. The heap is too dry – remove cover, add water.
- **Rats move in:** heap is too dry: ½ a bucket of water for a few nights & kick the bin every time you pass. Move the bin away from the wall or fence – this is giving them a safe 'rat run' in & out. Change the environment daily – move pots or bucket around. Hopefully rats will get unsettled & move out.