

Composting

Why Compost?

Composting is an inexpensive, natural process that transforms your kitchen and garden waste into a valuable and nutrient rich food for your garden. It's easy to make and use

Environmental reasons

Do your bit to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill. Even for households that are already composting, new research has found that almost half of the food waste in their rubbish bins could have been composted.

Did you know, composting at home for just one year can save global warming gases equivalent to all the CO₂ your kettle produces

annually, or your washing machine produces in three months?

When your waste is composted above ground at home, oxygen helps the waste to decompose aerobically which means hardly



any methane is produced, which is good news for the planet. And what's more, after nine to twelve months, you get a free fertiliser for your garden and plant pots

to keep them looking beautiful.

Benefits for your garden

Your compost is a nutrient-rich food product for your garden and will help improve soil structure, maintain moisture levels, and keep your soil's pH balance in check while helping to suppress plant disease. It will have everything your plants need including nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium and it will help buffer soils that are very acidic or alkaline. Compost improves your soil's condition and your plants and flowers will love it!

COMPOSTING

Setting up your bin 1

Making compost 2

Step by step guide 3

Using your compost 4

Setting up your bin

Ideally site your compost bin in a reasonably sunny spot on bare soil.

The reason you should site your bin on soil is that it makes it very easy for beneficial microbes and insects to gain access to the rotting material. It also allows for better aeration and drainage, both important to suc-

cessful composting.

On wire mesh

If you're worried about vermin becoming a problem, adding a wire mesh base to your bin when you set it up can help avoid problems later. To do this you need to dig

a shallow hole (approximately 1 inch deep) that is equal to the diameter of your bin. Cut a piece of wire mesh to slightly larger diameter than the base of your bin and place it over the hole. Place your bin on top of both.

Setting up your bin



On paving

If it is possible to remove the paving below the compost bin, then this is the best solution for paved or courtyard gardens but, if not, there are a few things you need to bear in mind.

Some liquid might seep out of the bottom of the bin and stain paving both underneath the bin and

sometimes around it. If this is likely to be a problem, then you should consider building a small raised bed filled with soil to put your compost bin on.

Liquid should be contained within the soil in the raised bed and you can always plant up around the bin to make it a feature. If you are putting your bin onto old paving and staining is not an issue, you will need

to introduce the soil-dwelling organisms manually.

You can do this by adding a shovelful or two of soil to the bottom of the bin or, better still, get some home compost from a nice mature bin. It may take a little longer for your bin to get started but it will soon be full of life.

Aim for a balance of 50% greens and 50% browns in your compost bin to get the right mix.

On gravel

You can easily put your bin onto gravel, whether it be in a gravel garden or on a gravel driveway or path. If you have laid a membrane beneath the gravel, you will need to cut a hole or slits in the membrane so that the soil-dwelling organisms can get through.

If you are concerned about compost messing up your

gravel when you empty the bin, you will need to lay out a plastic sheet to keep the gravel clean when it is time to empty the bin.

On concrete

If you must place your bin on concrete, remember to add a thin layer of soil to get it started. This will help attract worms and other beneficial organisms.

Screening your compost bin

If space is limited and you don't have an out of the way corner in which to put your bin, you can screen it from view by using live plants, a trellis, bamboo or willow.

Making compost

Greens'

Quick to rot and provide important nitrogen and moisture.

- Animal manure with straw
- Annual weeds
- Bracken
- Brussels sprout stalk
- Carrot tops
- Citrus peel

- Coffee grounds
- Comfrey leaves
- Cut flowers
- Fruit peelings and pulp
- Fruit seeds
- Grass mowing's
- Hay
- Hedge clippings
- House plants

- Ivy leaves
- Nettles
- Old bedding plants
- Perennial weeds
- Poisonous plants
- Rhubarb leaves
- Soft pruning's and plant debris
- Tea leaves and bags
- Vegetable peelings





'Browns'

Slower to rot, provide carbon & fibre and allow air pockets to form.

- Autumn leaves
- Cardboard
- Christmas tree
- Corn starch liners
- Cotton towels
- Cotton wool
- Egg boxes
- Egg shells
- Evergreen pruning's
- Hair
- Natural corks
- Nuts
- Paper bags
- Privet
- Straw
- Sweetcorn cobs
- Thorny pruning's
- Tomato plants
- Used kitchen paper
- Vacuum cleaner contents
- Wood ash

Keep this Out!

Certain things should never be put in your bin

- Bones
- Bread
- Cat litter
- Cigarette ends
- Coal ash
- Dairy products
- Disposable nappies
- Dog faeces
- Dog food
- Meat and fish scraps
- Olive oil
- Soiled tissues

*'Giving your
food and
organic
waste new
life'*

Step by Step Guide

Find the right site

Ideally site your compost bin in a reasonably sunny site on bare soil. If you have to put your compost bin on concrete, tarmac or patio slabs, ensure there's a layer of paper and twigs or existing compost to the bottom. Choose a place where you can easily add ingredients and get the compost out

Add the right ingredients

Have a container available such as a kitchen caddy or old ice cream tub. Fill your caddy with everything from vegetable and fruit peelings to tea bags, toilet rolls, cereal boxes, and eggshells.

Take care not to compost cooked food, meat or fish

Fill it up

Empty your kitchen caddy along with your garden waste into your compost bin. A 50/50 mix of greens and browns is the perfect recipe for good compost

Wait a while

It takes between 9-12 months for your compost to be ready for use, so all you need to do is let nature do its work. Keep adding greens and browns to top up your compost

Ready for use

Once your compost has turned into crumbly, dark material, resembling thick, moist soil and gives off an earthy, fresh aroma, you know it's ready to use.

Removing the compost

Lift the bin slightly or open the hatch at the bottom and scoop out the fresh compost with a garden fork, spade or trowel.

Use it

Don't worry if your compost looks a little lumpy with twigs and bits of eggshell—this is perfectly normal. Use it to enrich borders and vegetable patches, plant up patio containers or feed the lawn



Using your compost

We explain some of the best ways to use compost around your garden.

Before starting, you'll probably want to find out if it actually is ready to go! You can do this by making sure your compost is dark brown and smells nice and earthy. It should also be slightly moist and have a crumbly texture.

It probably won't look like the compost you buy in the shops and it's very likely that yours will still have twigs and eggshell in it!

Don't worry... it's still perfectly good to use. Simply sift out any larger bits and return them to your compost bin.

Your fresh compost is nutrient-rich food for your garden and will help improve soil structure, maintain moisture levels and keep your soils pH balance in check while helping suppress plant disease. It has everything your plants need including nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium and it will help improve soils that are very acidic or alkaline.. Compost improves your soil's condition and your plants and flowers will love it!

Flowerbeds

Help your new plants and flowers bloom by digging a 10cm layer of compost into the soil prior to planting. If your flowers have already been planted, you simply need to spread a thin layer of compost-enriched soil around the base of the plants. Nutrients will work their way down to the roots and your plants will enjoy the healthy boost compost provides. It is important that you leave gaps around any soft stemmed plants.

Enrich new borders

The borders of your garden will also greatly appreciate your compost.

Spread up to a 5cm layer of compost over the existing soil. Worms will quickly like getting to work mixing it in for you! Otherwise you can dig your finished compost into the soil prior to planting.

It is important that you leave gaps around any soft stemmed plants.

Mulch

Using your compost as a mulch is a good idea. Using 'rough' compost (where not everything has broken down) over flowerbeds and around shrubs, helps prevent soil erosion and will replenish much needed nutrients, and will retain moisture after rain.

Around trees

Compost is great for your trees. Spreading a 5-10 cm layer around the roots will provide them with important nutrients and can protect against drought and disease.

Avoid the base of the tree and do not spread too close to the trunk. Your trees will also benefit from less weeds growing around them. Doing this once or twice a year will help you trees grow bushy and tall.

Replenish Pots

Give your potted plants and containers an extra boost by removing the top few centimeters of existing soil and adding your freshly made compost.

Leave a gap around soft stemmed plants. This will provide food for your plants and flowers and is a great way to make them more healthy and robust.

Patio Containers

You can mix home compost with regular soil

or leaf mould to create your own healthy potting mixture for patio containers.

Your plants and any new plants from seeds will enjoy the additional nutrients and minerals that your compost enriched potting mixture contains, and outdoor container plants will love it too.

About a third of the mix should be compost, slightly less when you are planting seeds. The reason for this is that home made compost is too strong to use on its own for planting into.

Healthier Herbs and vegetables

Compost is excellent for growing herbs such as chives, parsley and mint.

Simply crumble it around the base of the plants for healthier, leafier herbs. Your vegetables will also grow better with compost added to their soil. Apply compost with each rotation - it's excep-

tionally good for planting potatoes and carrots.

Feeding your lawn

Dressing your lawn with compost helps young grass take root and can make your garden healthier and greener.

First, you'll need to sieve the compost and remove any large twigs or any other items that have not quite broken down. Next, mix it with an even amount of sharp sand to compost as this will allow it to spread more easily. You will need a layer of about 2.5cm.

Mature lawns can really benefit from this little extra kick of nutrients but be aware of newly seeded or turfed lawns can be scorched by it.