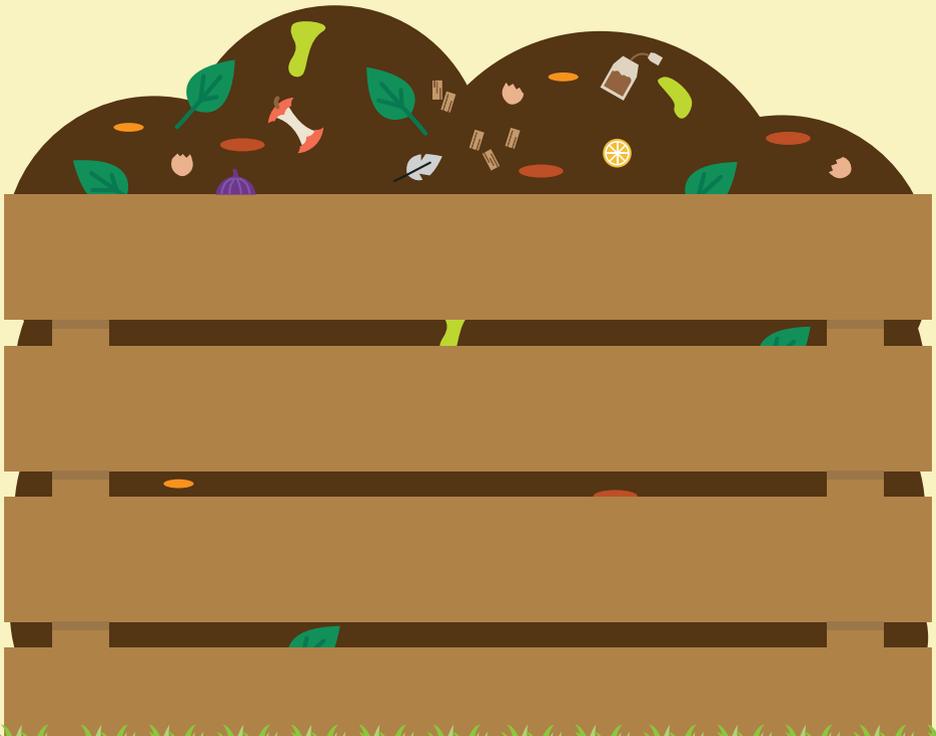


COMPOSTING AT HOME

**A quick and easy guide to
composting at home and using
your finished compost**



FEED YOUR BIN, NOT LANDFILL, WHY COMPOST AT HOME?

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 put in the compost bin.

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 3 months?

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 to use. This guide will show you how to get started and provide you with useful tips on how to get the most out of your compost bin.

WHY DO I NEED TO COMPOST MY PEELINGS WHEN THEY BREAK DOWN IN LANDFILL ANYWAY?

In reality organic waste that is sent to landfill is unable to decompose properly because, squashed under all the other waste, it doesn't have any access to air. So instead methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, is produced which contributes to global warming. When you compost your organic waste at home you are not only providing your garden with a limitless soil improver for plants and vegetables, but you are doing your bit to reduce global warming too! 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.

COMPOSTING IS EASY: A STEP BY STEP GUIDE

1 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 on the bottom so the worms and other creatures can colonise. Choose a place where you can easily add ingredients to the bin and get the compost out.

2 Add the right ingredients

Have a container available such as a kitchen caddy or old ice cream tub so that you can collect items for your compost bin from all over the house. Fill your kitchen caddy or container with everything from vegetable and fruit peelings to teabags, toilet roll tubes, cereal boxes and eggshells. Take care not to compost cooked food, meat or fish. See page 7 for more information on how to make good compost.

3 Fill it up

Empty your kitchen caddy along with your garden waste into your compost bin. A 50/50 mix of greens and browns (see pages 7 and 8) is the perfect recipe for good compost.

4 Wait a while

It takes between nine and twelve months for your compost to become ready for use, so now all you need to do is wait and let nature do the work. Keep on adding greens and browns to top up your compost.

5 Ready for use

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

6 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. See page 9 for a guide to getting your compost out of the bin.

7 Use it

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

For further advice, hints, tips and information please visit www.recyclenow.com/compost

HOW TO GET THE RIGHT COMPOST MIX?

FOOD

The key to making good compost is to use a balance of different types of materials. Young, wet, sappy materials, like grass cuttings and vegetable peelings, rot quickly and are known as 'greens'. Greens need to be mixed with tougher, dry items like old bedding plants and cardboard known as 'browns'. Browns add structure to the compost allowing air in and providing the microbes with a balanced diet.

Aim for a 50/50 mix of both wet greens and dry browns. For example, for every caddy full of crumpled up paper and cardboard packaging (eg. egg boxes)

AIR

The microbes that make the best compost need air to live. It is important to allow air into the bin to aid composting. This can be done in a variety of ways:

add crumpled up paper, cardboard egg boxes or loo roll tubes to ensure air pockets.

stick a fork or broom handle as far into the compost as possible and give it a good wiggle!

dig your compost over using a garden fork (if you use a compost bin please make sure you have good access to the material before you do this).

ENOUGH MOISTURE

If you have the right balance of 'greens' and 'browns' you should have the correct amount of moisture.

However, if it is too dry add some more greens, and if it is too wet add some more browns. For a quick fix you can add moisture with a watering can, or a really easy way is to leave the lid off for a while and let the rain in.

WARMTH

Microbes need warmth to thrive, so siting your bin in partial sun and keeping covered will ensure plenty of warmth. You can keep adding waste on top of it as it will rot down as well.

HALF FULL BINS

If the bin is quite empty lay some flattened cardboard over the top. This will keep heat in. You can keep adding waste on top of it as it will rot down as well.

DID YOU KNOW...

Living microscopic organisms break down the materials we compost by feeding on them. These microbes include bacteria and other very small organisms. In order to live, microbes need food, air, moisture and warmth - just like you and me!

BULKY WASTE

For any items which are too big to fit in a car or you can't take them to the tip you can book a bulky waste collection online.

GARDEN WASTE COLLECTION SUBSCRIPTION

From April 2021 Nottingham city households can subscribe for an additional garden waste collection.

www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/bulkywaste

For more information visit: www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/gardenwaste

MAKING GOOD COMPOST

The key to good compost lies in getting the mix right. You need to keep your greens and browns properly balanced. If your compost is too wet and gives off an odour, add more browns. If it's too dry and is not rotting, add some greens. Air is essential to the composting process and by mixing material up, as you fill your bin, it will create air pockets and help keep your compost healthy.



We filled three compost bins with three different mixtures to show you how to make the best compost...

1. TOO GREEN

This is a classic mistake made by many first time composters. They get their brand new compost bin and just use it to get rid of their grass cuttings, and fruit and vegetable peelings. These are great things to put in a bin, but on their own you will end up with a sludgy, smelly mess.

FIRST DAY

Only grass cuttings and peelings visible.

AFTER A COUPLE OF WEEKS

Lots of fruit flies, looks like a green lump, smells rotten and the bin feels warm at this stage.

AFTER A MONTH

will just be a moist, lumpy mess and will have lost that vital heat that is needed for the composting process due to the lack of air.

CAN I DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT?

A bit of hard work is the remedy for sludge. Use a fork to empty the bin and break up any solid clumps. Then refill the bin, adding plenty of brown material and some fresh greens as you go. Be patient, as it will take a couple of months to look like it should.

1. TOO BROWN

Autumn is a typical time of year for this to occur. Due to the large number of leaves falling from the trees and a flurry of plant pruning, bins get filled with too many leaves. Leafmould usually takes two years before it is ready to use.

You don't necessarily need nitrogen to kick start the process but it helps. Autumn leaves don't produce enough nitrogen to activate the heat production.

FIRST DAY

A heap of leaves, branches, straw and paper, very dry looking.

AFTER A COUPLE OF WEEKS

Looks much the same, no smell and just a few woodlice and ants.

AFTER A MONTH

Still no change!

THAT'S LIKE MY BIN, WHAT CAN I DO?

Leaves should be composted separately to make lovely leafmould. Thoroughly water the leaves and place in black plastic sacks, punctured with a fork to allow air to circulate. It should take about two years for leafmould to be produced. This rich leafmould can be used as a weed suppressing and moisture retaining mulch or a soil improver. If your bin does have more leaves in it than it should do, you can add nettles soaked in cold water which also makes a great activator for a dry compost bin.

3. JUST RIGHT!

The 'green' items contain bacteria that generates the initial heat that is required by the process. A healthy compost bin is a living ecosystem.

By keeping a good mix of green and brown material you will provide the perfect conditions for a variety of mini-beasts, and can let them do all of the hard work.

FIRST DAY

Green and brown items visible; egg shells, vegetable peelings, scrunched up cardboard, grass cuttings, prunings etc.

AFTER A COUPLE OF WEEKS

Looking a bit moist, the level will keep dropping and air-pockets will be letting it breathe.

AFTER A COUPLE OF MONTHS

Small clumps of green material are still visible (see below), brown items still showing but starting to decompose and looking quite damp, fruit flies and slugs and worms may also be present.

AFTER SIX MONTHS

Black and crumbly material, no smell, some woody brown material and egg shells still visible, some worms and bugs left but most creatures will have moved on to find fresher food.

THAT WASN'T TOO TRICKY, WHAT SHOULD I DO TO KEEP IT GOING?

Just keep on doing the same thing. Make sure you keep adding the right combination of green and browns and you'll have a continuous supply of nutritious compost for your garden. Don't forget to aerate your compost once in a while by using a fork or a broom handle.

START HOME COMPOSTING TODAY!

At least 30% of your household bin could be composted.

A lot of people think that garden waste is the only thing that you can put into your compost bin. But there are actually loads more everyday waste items from your home that you can add to enrich your compost.

Here's some information about what you can add to your bin to make the best compost. Aim for a balance of 50% greens and 50% browns in your compost bin to get the right mix.

GREENS

Quick to rot and provide important nitrogen and moisture.



Tea bags

Grass cuttings

Vegetable peelings, salad leaves and fruit scraps

Old flowers and nettles

Coffee grounds and filter papers

Spent bedding plants

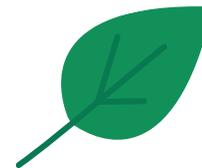
Rhubarb leaves

Young annual weeds (e.g. chickweed)

Comfrey leaves

Pond algae and seaweed

Coffee Grounds



BROWNS

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

Crushed egg shells

Egg and cereal boxes

Corrugated cardboard and paper (scrunched up in small amounts)

Newspaper (scrunched up)

Toilet and kitchen roll tubes

Garden prunings

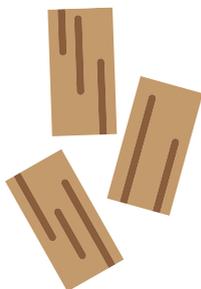
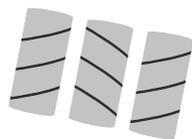
Dry leaves, twigs and hedge clippings

Straw and hay

Bedding from vegetarian pets

Ashes from wood, paper and lumpwood charcoal

Wool



Sawdust and wood chippings

Woody clippings

Cotton threads and string (made from natural fibre)

Feathers

Vacuum bag contents

Old natural fibre clothes (cut into small pieces)

Tissues, paper towels and napkins (unless they have been in contact with meat, fats, oils or disease)

Shredded confidential documents

Corn cobs and stalks

Tumble dryer lint (from natural fibre clothes)

Pine needles and cones (slow to compost – don't put too much in)



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why does my bin smell?

You need to introduce more oxygen in your compost bin so that your waste can break down aerobically. By mixing bulky items such as toilet roll tubes, cardboard or scrunched up or shredded paper into your bin you can introduce pockets of air.

I've waited a while but I still don't have any compost at the bottom of my compost bin. Why is this?

Don't forget it takes 9-12 months to make finished compost. Keep adding a good balance of greens and browns and the creatures will keep composting everything down.

Why do I get a lot of ants in my bin?

Ants are part of the home composting process but it could mean that your bin is too dry. For a quick fix, add some cold water to your bin. Over time, you need to add more 'green' nitrogen rich items such as grass cuttings and kitchen peelings to keep moisture levels up.

I seem to have a lot of small black flies in my compost bin. Is this good for the compost or should I get rid of them?

Fruit flies do not carry disease and do not harm your compost. However, if you find them unpleasant you can reduce their numbers by ensuring that the organic waste destined for your bin is always covered in the kitchen or wherever it is stored.

You can eradicate them by keeping the lid off your bin for 3 or 4 days, thus allowing the predator beetles to gain access and kill them for you; and by covering the compost surface with about an inch of soil to prevent the hatching flies from being able to escape. They are not an indicator of a failing bin.

Do compost bins attract rats?

Some people worry that having a compost bin could attract rats. But in fact there are many other reasons why rats may already be in the vicinity of your garden. For example if you live near water, farm land/ open countryside or derelict buildings, you are likely to have rats living around the local area. They may be attracted into your garden, like other animals, to look for a dry place to shelter, for example under a shed or decking or to find food. One common source of food is over-feeding wild birds (leaving excess food exposed). A rat is only likely to seek out a compost bin in the garden if incorrect waste items have been composted, making the bin a source of food as well as a shelter. For this reason you should not compost cooked foods, dairy products, meat, fish or bones. However, a compost bin that is used a lot will deter them.

For more information please visit our website:
www.mynottingham.gov.uk/recycling or
www.recyclenow.com/reduce-waste/composting



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