

COMPOSTING

WHY RECYCLE ORGANICS?

When organic material is compacted and buried in landfill, it breaks down anaerobically (without oxygen) and in doing so, produces large quantities of methane, a greenhouse gas 24 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

By diverting food and garden waste from landfill and turning it into compost, excessive methane production is avoided and what was once 'waste' becomes a valuable resource – organic fertiliser.



WHAT IS COMPOSTING?

Composting: turning waste into a resource by providing the right conditions to encourage the decomposition of organic material.

HOW DOES COMPOSTING BENEFIT YOU?

Fertiliser produced in a compost can:

- Improve soil structure and water retention
- Encourage microorganisms into your garden
- Produce healthier and more resilient plants
- It's free and completely organic!

SETTING UP A COMPOST BIN

If you wish to compost using a bin, there are many types to choose from – free standing tumblers and static bins on the ground of all shapes and sizes. You can set it up using the below steps:

1. Choose a well-drained, sunny location.
2. Make a base layer of coarse material (8-12cm) – this will assist air flow throughout the heap.
3. Add a thin layer (1-2cm) of rich soil/finished compost.
4. Add water – your compost should be as moist as a wrung-out sponge.
5. Add 'greens' – nitrogen-rich materials e.g. Fruit/veg, grass clippings.
6. Add 'browns' – carbon-based materials e.g. Dry leaves and newspaper.
7. Layer the contents – one layer of brown material, then one layer of green material.
8. Cover with hessian (not plastic) if required.
9. Turn the heap every week or two.

MAINTAINING A COMPOST

There are four main elements to maintaining a compost bin the – **ADAM** principle.

Aliveness

- Billions of microorganisms and small invertebrates work together to break down organic waste
- The heat produced from respiring bacteria, fungi, snails, centipedes, worms, vinegar flies and many other organisms is essential for decomposition
- Compost bins which are on natural ground (not on tiled or paved surfaces), tend to have more microorganisms, as they can enter and exit the compost underground

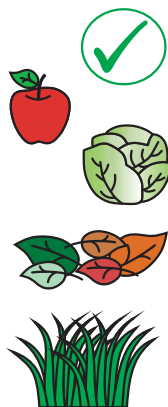


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Diversity

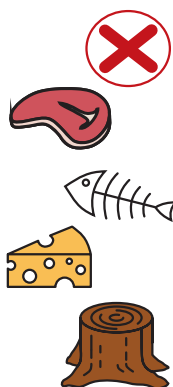
- We want to give our compost a diversity (variety) of food! This is split into 'greens' and 'browns'
- Greens are nitrogen-rich: fresh grass clippings, fruit/vegetable scraps, manure, tea leaves, coffee grounds, even hair and vacuum cleaner dust
- Browns are carbon-based: sticks/twigs, dry grass, straw, dry leaves, egg cartons, shredded newspaper
- To get the perfect ratio, add twice as many browns as greens in multiple layers (like a lasagne!). Always finish with a brown layer on top.

What can I feed my compost?



- All fruit and vegetables (including onions and citrus)
- Leaves and grass clippings
- Small branches
- Small bits of cotton
- Hair, nails and vacuum cleaner dust
- Weeds
- Small amounts of cardboard/newspaper
- Manure (herbivore only)

What should I avoid putting in compost?



- All meat and seafood
- Dairy products
- Large amounts of cardboard
- Tree stumps or large branches
- Building timber
- Bread, pasta and noodles
- Non-herbivore manure

Aeration

- All the critters living in the compost need air!
- Turn the compost once a week to incorporate oxygen and avoid smells
- This can be done with a garden fork, compost turner, or PVC pipe core

Moisture

- Your compost should be as moist as a wrung-out sponge
- Add water if too dry, but do not overwater
- Reuse leftover water from cooking pasta/potatoes, a vase, coffee/teapot, or simply use water from the hose or watering can



TROUBLESHOOTING

Issue	Solution
Smelly = too wet; not enough air; too acidic	Add dry material; turn heap; add dolomite
Slow = not enough/too much air; too dry; no active ingredients	Turn heap; add water; add manure (herbivore only)
Excessive number of small flies	Cover with soil or any brown material
Vermin = wrong food or warm dry nest	Remove breads, grains, meat or dairy products; cover entry with wire; turn heap; moisten