

# Composting

Composting is the breakdown of organic material, such as kitchen and garden waste, by organisms in a controlled environment.

Up to 60% of household rubbish entering landfill sites comprises of garden waste which could be composted and therefore re-used.

Composting is very simple and costs very little in time and effort.

## Why compost?

### The production of methane gas

Due to the lack of oxygen in landfill sites, organic waste produces potentially explosive methane gas as it decomposes. The gas also contributes to climate change and global warming.

### Saves money

Composting can provide a rich soil conditioner which increases vegetable, flower, lawn and tree growth in any garden.

### Environmentally friendly

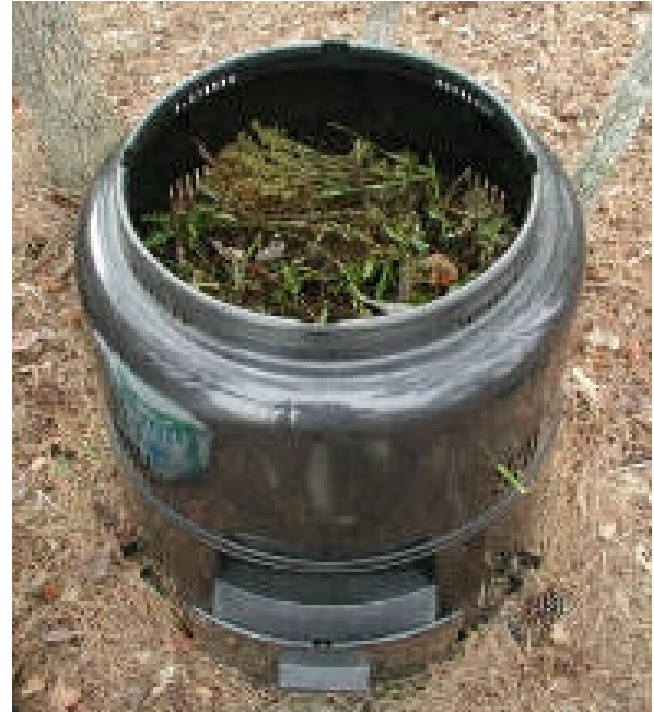
Composting reduces the amount of waste sent to landfill, it does not require any chemical action and therefore has **zero negative effect** on the environment.

### Reduction in Peat Usage

Preserving internationally important peatland natural habitat.

### Proximity Principle

Convert a locally occurring waste into a locally available resource, eliminating the negative impact of transport.



## Compost Containers

### Compost Bin

Compost bins are made from recycled plastic. They require little or no maintenance.

### The Quick Compost Tumbler

This is suitable for larger gardens. It is suspended with a bar through the centre so that you can turn the contents. Although the compost is produced quicker it is very labour intensive.

### The Wormery

This looks similar to the compost bin but has a solid base to contain the worms, which accelerate the composting process. The wormery produces high quality compost but **is only suitable for fruit and vegetable waste**, not garden waste.

Links:

[www.compost.bc.ca](http://www.compost.bc.ca)

For information on getting started!

## What to compost

Organic materials fall into two categories - Green and Brown.

### Green organic waste

Also known as 'nitrogen rich' organic waste. It is wet and often green - eg grass clippings and vegetables.

### Brown organic waste

Also known as 'carbon rich' organic material. It is dry, woody material that is usually brown - eg leaves.

<u>Green Organic Waste</u>	<u>Brown Organic Waste</u>
Coffee Grounds	Egg Shells
Tea Bags and Leaves	Kitchen Paper
Fruit and Vegetable Waste (Cooked or Raw)	Shredded Newspaper
Bread, Pasta and Rice	Papers and light cardboard
Cut and Dead Flowers	Pet and Human Hairs
Manure from Vegetarian Pets	Wood/Peat/Peat Ashes
Grass Cuttings and Green Leaves	Tree Prunings and Woody Material
Weeds (Avoid Weed Seeds)	Hay and Straw
Old Disease Free Plants	Sawdust or Wood Shavings
Seaweed or Garden Pond Cleanings	

## What not to compost

### Meat and fish scraps

Attract pests

### Grease and oil

Slow to decompose and attract pests

### Cat litter or cat and dog droppings

Temperature of the bin is too low to kill any diseased cells (pathogens).

### Glossy paper or magazines

Plastic coating will not compost.

### Barbecue and coal ashes

Coals have been chemically treated and will contaminate the compost.

### Large woody material

Slow to compost.

### Evergreen shrubs

Highly acidic.

### Garden wastes that have been treated with chemicals

This will chemically contaminate the compost.

### Disposable nappies or septic tank

Temperature of the bin too low to kill any diseased cells (pathogens).

### Soil

Slows down the decomposition process.

## How to compost

### Stage 1

Compost breaks down best in the shade, where it won't dry out from exposure to the sun. Place the bin where it can be accessed, added to and turned easily. It is also a good idea to place the bin directly on soil/grass, where it can benefit from decomposers such as worms.

### Stage 2

Protect your compost bin from heavy rain as it may waterlog the bin and starve it of air, which will hinder the composting process.

### Stage 3

To begin, start at the bottom of the bin with bigger, bushy materials such as woody prunings to make air pockets in the pile. Alternate layers of brown and green. Moisten each layer with water. Use a fork to mix, similar to tossing a salad. Top the pile with a layer of browns, aged compost or soil. Do not forget the vital mix of brown's and green's in equal measure.

### Stage 4

The compost is ready when it has a brown and crumbly texture. It can then be put back into the garden.

## Fascinating Facts

- Approximately 5-7 million tonnes of organic waste is thrown away every year.
- Compost worms breed every 7-10 days and eat half their body weight in food every day.
- Compost can be made in six to eight weeks, or it can take up to a year. The more effort you put in the quicker the compost will be produced!



## Links

The Community Composting Network

[www.communitycompost.org](http://www.communitycompost.org)

*Provide advice and support to community composting projects across the UK.*

The Composting Association

[www.compost.org.uk](http://www.compost.org.uk)

*Researches and promotes best practice in composting and the uses of compost.*

Wiggly Wigglers

[www.wigglywigglers.co.uk](http://www.wigglywigglers.co.uk)

*If you live in a flat this company sells indoor composting bins for your kitchen waste, "can-o-worms"*

*Also look at the website for your local county council, as they may provide compost bins.*