

Your guide to composting



Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Why compost?

The average household bin contains 43% of organic material that could be composted. If all households were composting, it would reduce the amount of waste going to incineration and landfill.

Compost can be easily produced using kitchen and garden waste. Composting speeds up decomposition, producing a rich plant food that can be used on gardens.

Home compost

- Provides valuable nutrients for your garden, helping plants to grow bigger and stronger
- Can be added to your soil at any time to improve the structure and moisture content
- Reduces the need for watering your garden
- Saves money on garden centre compost
- Reduces the need for peat compost which comes from peat bogs that are protected ecosystems

What is compost?

Compost is a mixture of decayed plant matter used to improve the quality of soil. Bacteria, fungi, worms and other small organisms in the soil and air breakdown organic materials. As the organisms break down the materials in the compost heap, heat is produced which speeds up decomposition. When the heap cools, larger insects breakdown the tougher materials.

How to compost at home

Kitchen waste

You can collect kitchen waste, peelings etc in a small bin or bag in your kitchen and transfer to your compost heap when full.

Garden waste

Prunings and grass cuttings can be added directly to your compost heap. Tougher materials, e.g. twigs and stems need to be cut into smaller pieces.

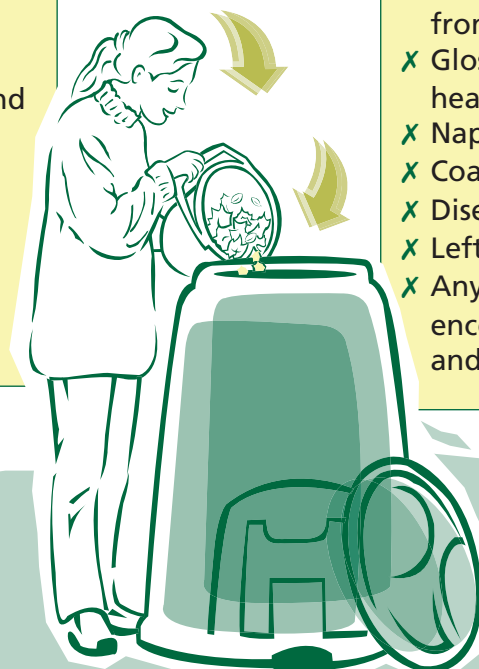
Materials should be mixed together so the compost does not become too slimy, preventing decomposition.

Do compost

- ✓ Vegetable and fruit peelings, egg shells
- ✓ Tea bags, coffee grounds
- ✓ Plant prunings and leaves
- ✓ Flowers and weeds
- ✓ Shredded card
- ✓ Old pure wool jumpers and other natural fabrics including hair
- ✓ Droppings and bedding from non herbivores, e.g. rabbits, horses and birds
- ✓ Straw

Don't compost

- ✗ Any meat, fish and dairy
- ✗ Animal droppings from carnivores
- ✗ Glossy magazines and heavily inked card
- ✗ Nappies
- ✗ Coal ash and soot
- ✗ Diseased plants
- ✗ Left over cooked food
- ✗ Anything that would encourage rodents and pests



Composting in your garden



Site

Your compost bin or heap needs to be located on a bare patch of earth. This enables micro organisms and worms to get into the waste to begin decomposing it.

Compost bins

There is a wide range of compost bins available to buy, in different sizes to suit all gardens. Please contact Solihull Council for details of subsidised containers.

Home made compost bins/heaps

Build your own compost bin from wood posts and wire. Good for bigger gardens with more waste.

Top Tips

- Don't compost the roots of perennial weeds, e.g. dandelions, they will grow back.
- Have two compost bins and use them in rotation to ensure you have a ready supply of compost all year round

For further information please contact the waste and recycling team on 0121 704 8000 or email wasteandrecycling@solihull.gov.uk www.solihull.gov.uk

Using your composter

- 1 Put your composter on bare ground, so the worms and organisms can move into the container and break down the organic material.
- 2 Fill your compost bin with a good mixture of kitchen and garden waste.
- 3 Use a mixture of brown materials, e.g. prunings and autumn leaves and green material, e.g. grass cuttings and peelings. Too many grass cuttings will turn the compost slimy and smelly.
- 4 Composting works best at high temperatures, so add large amounts of material. This will increase the temperature inside the bin, and help the organisms get to work.
- 5 Stir the compost to add air using a garden tool or stick. This is because the worms and organisms, need to breathe.
- 6 Throw on a handful of soil or old compost from time to time.
- 7 Compost should be moist and not wet. If too wet, add dry material, if too dry, water lightly.

Usually after a few months brown crumbly compost is produced. You may need to experiment with different materials and mixtures on your compost heap to produce the perfect compost. Keep persevering and you can achieve great things.

Frequently asked questions

My compost heap has a bad smell.

This is caused by the lack of air. The solution is to regularly turn your compost heap and mix in lots of air. You can also add more layers of brown material such as straw, hedge clippings and small amounts of soil or egg shells.

How long will it take to produce compost?

The time taken varies, it can be as quick as six weeks. When the compost is brown and crumbly and you can't see much of the original material, it is ready to put on your garden.

How can I speed up the composting process?

Add a few shovels of compost or soil. Keep your compost bin warm.