

HOME COMPOSTING

West Northamptonshire Council have recently introduced an annual subscription charge for the green bin fortnightly collection service from April 2022 of £42.00 per bin per year. Therefore the Environment Group thought it would be helpful to give you a guide to home composting to try and encourage villagers to recycle more green waste at home. This is better for the environment and should help to save you money on bin collection costs and buying in compost.

Why compost at home?

When organic waste is sent to landfill, air cannot get to it. As the waste breaks down it creates methane, which is a harmful greenhouse gas. However, when this same waste is composted above ground at home, oxygen helps the waste to decompose aerobically which means no methane is produced.

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.

Composting bins

West Northamptonshire Council have teamed up with <https://getcomposting.com/en-gb/> to offer discounted compost bins, limited to 1 bin per household. The Blackwall 220 litre Black Compost Converter bin is available at a subsidised charge of £3.01 per bin + delivery = £10.00 total (reduced from £22.00 per bin). The products are made from 100% recycled plastic.

The Blackwall 220 litre Black Compost Converter bin is a basic compost bin, but obviously other composting bins are available in a range of different shapes and sizes and prices.

If you have a large garden producing lots of green waste you will likely need a large compost bin/bay. You can easily make these from wooden pallets. Gardeners' World have a good webpage showing you how to do this...

Compost bin location

Have your bin:

- South facing if possible - to keep it warm,
- Level, and
- On a site that is free draining, e.g. on soil/turf - to allow worms to get in.

Correct balance of 'greens' and 'browns'

You will need to get the balance of 'greens' and 'browns' right to get the correct carbon to nitrogen ratio. A 50% 'green's and 50% 'brown's' ratio, added in layers like a lasagne usually works well. But:

- If compost is looking dry – add some 'greens'
- If compost is looking wet/slimy – add some 'browns'

Composting process

The main components of the composting process are:

- Organic matter

What to put in your compost

'Greens'

Quick to rot and they provide important nitrogen and moisture

- Tea bags
- Coffee grounds and filter paper
- Vegetable peelings, salad leaves and fruit scraps
- Old flowers
- Grass cuttings
- Spent bedding plants
- Rhubarb leaves
- Young annual weeds that don't contain seeds

'Browns'

Slower to rot. They provide fibre and carbon and also allow important air pockets to form in the mixture.

- Garden prunings/twigs/hedge clippings – best to shred these if large
- Crushed eggshells (to add useful minerals)
- Cardboard such as egg and cereal boxes; corrugated cardboard, toilet and kitchen roll tubes
- Scrunched up paper
- Shredded paper
- Tissues, paper towels and napkins
- Straw and hay
- Bedding from vegetarian pets
- Ashes from wood, paper and charcoal
- Sawdust and wood chippings
- Wool
- Feathers
- Old natural fibre clothes (cut into small pieces)

Keep these out

- Cooked vegetables, meat and dairy products
- Diseased plants
- Dog poo, cat litter, or baby's nappies.
- Weeds that have lots of seeds/invasive roots (as the compost doesn't get hot enough to kill the weed seeds)

- Microorganisms (bacteria, fungi)
- Worms and maggots
- Oxygen
- Moisture

Compost takes approx. 9 – 12 months to make. 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.

Compost Activators

Using a compost activator can speed up the composting process by encouraging the growth of bacteria and fungi, which will help break down organic materials in your compost heap. You can grow comfrey and add it to the compost heap or buy activator from your local garden centre. There are also lots of compost activator recipes/tips available online.

Top tips

- Aerate the compost on a regular basis, if you have a bay system move it from one bin to the next, or if you have a plastic compost bin, move the compost around with a garden fork every few

weeks. This helps to speed up the composting process.

- Don't compact it too much – it needs to have air in it.
- The compost heap needs to be moist but not soaking wet.
- Put a lid on it! Put a cover over the compost to help keep it warm, e.g. some tarpaulin. This helps speed up the composting process and helps to kill off pathogens and weed seeds.
- Let the worms do the work! They eat through the compost and mix it up. They usually come up through the ground into the bin, but if you haven't got worms you can buy them online and add them to your compost bin.
- The bigger the compost heap the faster it will compost.

For some FAQs and help on composting see the Parish Council Website <https://www.boddingtonparish.co.uk/index.php/information/sustainability>

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